A CITY
IN
TRANSITION

Studies in the Social Life of
Madras

BY

C. W. RANSON
Frere Exhibitioner in Indian Studies
Oxford University, 1936-37

FOREWORD

BY

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PREFACE

THIS book is, so far as I am aware, the first published attempt to examine in detail some of the processes and problems of urbanization in South India. The raw material from which it has been written was collected during a period of five years' residence in Madras City and a subsequent furlough in the British Isles. The worker in this field of social study is heavily handicapped by a lack of adequate and accurate statistical data, and that fact, combined with the desire to limit the size of the volume, accounts for the many gaps in the picture of Madras which is here presented. The book does not pretend to be a complete social survey. As the sub-title indicates, it is a series of studies in the social life of the city. It is divided into five parts, each of which represents a more or less separate study. But the whole volume will, I think, be found to possess a definite unity.

The report of the recent enquiry conducted by the Government of Madras into the family budgets of industrial workers in Madras City was published in October 1938, when this book was in the press. This report is a most valuable survey —the first of its kind in Madras Presidency. It covers a wider field and contains a greater wealth and variety of statistical material than the chapter on 'Family Income and Expenditure' included in these pages. But the more detailed investigation of the Government enquiry confirms, at almost every point, the facts and arguments concerning poverty in the city which are advanced in this book.

My debt to others is, to some extent, indicated in the footnotes and the bibliography. But my greatest obligation is to the many friends in Madras and elsewhere who have shared with me their knowledge and experience of Indian conditions. Of these, I must pay special tribute to my tutor and friend, the late Dr. Gilbert Slater, who has probably done more than any other single person to encourage Indian social research during the last twenty years.

To the National Christian Council of India, Burma and Ceylon, at whose request this book has been published, I am grateful for practical help and guidance.

Finally, I must thank the Master of Balliol for his generous encouragement. He has added heavily to my debt to him, which was already great, by finding time, amid the many important claims upon him, to read through the page proofs and to write a foreword. I am sensible of the honour he has done this little book and sincerely grateful.

C. W. RANSON

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FOREWORD

BY

THE MASTER OF BALLIOL

I GLADLY accede to the request that I should write a foreword to this book by Mr. Ranson on the social life of Madras. It seems to me to have all the virtues that a book of this kind should have: on the one hand scientific, careful, statistical, using all the sources of knowledge that a scholar has access to—on the other hand, obviously based on personal knowledge and investigation and care. No one can read it without feeling that Mr. Ranson cares intensely that certain things should be done in Madras. The book is an appeal for action to the citizens of that great city, but no one either, I think, can feel that Mr. Ranson has an axe to grind, a party to uphold, or—what is almost as deceptive—a pet thesis to defend.

It was research of this kind which the Commission on Christian Higher Education hoped might be one of the results of their report, and I like to remember that when I was in Madras as Chairman of that Commission, and we were discussing what should be the special function of the Christian Colleges, there came out of the discussion the phrase: 'the putting of the scientific mind behind the merciful heart'. That is what I am sure one way or other all fruitful research ought to be. What is sometimes described as the pure disinterested love of knowledge for its own sake may easily become the idlest curiosity, and can lead to little but the endless production of theses for doctorates. They gain their author his degree, and then cumber library shelves unused. The merciful or passionate heart if left to itself will produce propaganda which may be good or bad, but is not knowledge and is an insecure guide to action. Profitable research must be based upon a real concern, and guided by the standards of scholarship and this book is a notable example of such research. I commend it to all citizens of that great and beautiful city of Madras, and to all who are concerned with the modern social problems of India which are so strikingly illustrated in this study.

A. D. LINDSAY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

PROFESSOR R. H. TAWNEY has described in a well-known passage[1] the effect of urban and industrial development on an agricultural society. A rural community with its unspecialized economic life is 'normally both unconscious of requiring elaborate social services and incapable of providing them. Nor on its first plunge into the world of great industry does it realize their necessity. Carrying the habits of the peasant into its new urban environment, it proceeds for a generation to poison its body and starve its soul before it realizes that what is innocuous in a village is deadly in a town. . . . The result is the paradox of rising pecuniary incomes and deepening social misery . . . which has emerged in all industrial revolutions, to the confusion of those who forget that the timid, starving creature, man is so compounded as to require not only money, but light, air and water, not to mention such uneconomic goods as tranquility, beauty and affection.'

The strange and hybrid life of the great cities of India cannot be understood apart from the rural background from which it springs. Many of the major social problems of the city of Madras are the problems of the peasant in the town.

This book is an attempt to describe some of these problems. It is written with the conviction that their solution is of the greatest importance not only to the well-being of the growing urban communities, but also to the future of rural India.

The growth of the modern Indian city marks a revolution in industry, politics and social life. Urban development has not, as in the West, destroyed the rural society from which it has sprung. Nor has it killed the immemorial traditions and habits of the village, which have frequently and with deadly results survived in the new urban environment. But it is in the city that an Indian democracy is becoming conscious of its powers. It is there that the battle is set between ancient traditions and new ideals; and it is there that social adaptation is to be seen in its most advanced forms.

[1] R. H. Tawney, *Equality* (Allen & Unwin), 1931.

The importance of the urbanizing influences which are so vigorously in operation in modern India lies not merely in the fact that those influences are centripetal—drawing increasing numbers of villagers into the vortex of city life; the influences of the city are also centrifugal. The streams which colour its thought and life are percolating slowly but steadily outwards to the remotest village. This tendency is strengthened by the fact, not only that Indian factory operatives are nearly all migrants from the villages, but that the migration is not always a permanent exodus. It is sometimes only a temporary transfer, and the industrial recruit frequently continues to regard as his home the place from which he has come, and often leaves the factory and the city for prolonged visits to the village.

Another factor of even more widespread significance in the diffusion of urban influence has been the rapid development of road transport. The motor bus has done for village India what the railway train could never have done. A network of road services is rapidly breaking down the ancient insularity of the villages. The motor bus hurtles precariously along uneven tracks, trailing clouds of dust, to villages which a few years ago had hardly heard of the existence of a train. This new mobility has been a factor of great importance in widening rural horizons.

It is probable that in a few years wireless broadcasting in India will be sufficiently developed to form a very important link between the village and the outside world. Already several successful experiments in rural broadcasting have been made and it is safe to predict that soon millions of Indian villagers will gather daily around communal loud speakers to listen to news, talks and entertainments broadcast from the larger towns and cities.

These growing contacts between the city and the village indicate quite clearly that the present-day urban life of India is going to play an important part in the future of village life. The tendency of some writers to regard the cities of India as artificial and rather regrettable excrescences which have no place in the life of the 'real India', is a very grave error. The cities are perhaps artificial, they may be a cause for regret, but they cannot be ignored as a factor of vital importance to the whole future of the Indian people. Their impact upon the village is, as yet, slight, but it is growing in force and in significance.

The Indian city provides a field for sociological enquiry which has hitherto been strangely neglected. Such work as

has been done has been limited mainly to Bombay. The city of Madras might be fairly accurately described as virgin soil. But it is soil which lends itself to profitable sociological exploration. Its growth has been less sensationally rapid than that of Calcutta and Bombay and, perhaps for that reason, Madras has, notably among Indian cities, retained many of the characteristics of the 'essential India' of the villages. It is not highly industrialized in the modern sense. It is a commercial rather than an industrial centre—a city of shopkeepers—though it does possess several large cotton mills, and in recent years 'industrial development has been marked and the tariffs have enabled the creation of pencil, match and tobacco factories, bidis[1] being made and exported in some quantity.'[2]

The South Indian seems to take more kindly to city life than most of his fellow-countrymen. The Report on the census of India for 1931 points out that 'there is a greater tendency to city life in Madras [Presidency] than in any major province but Bombay, but the towns are far less industrial in character than [those] of the latter province'.[3] This does not necessarily mean that the South Indian is a better citizen than the Bengali or the Mahratta. But there is reason to believe that he fits fairly easily and naturally into the life of a city community, and this fact helps to reduce the inevitable tendency toward artificiality which characterizes city life everywhere, and to render Madras, among Indian cities, a less exotic growth than its more highly westernized sisters. An important point in this connection is the relative importance of the Adi-Dravida[4] in Madras. This community provides the bulk of the manual labour in the southern Presidency city, and occupies a more prominent place in the life of the city than the 'outcaste' in Bombay and Calcutta. Adi-Dravida migration to Madras city is frequently family migration, as opposed to the industrial migration in other centres, which is largely confined to men. The Madras Adi-Dravida tends to establish himself in the city in mud and thatch huts and to retain his own form of community life, within the larger city community. The transition of a family from village life to an Adi-Dravida hutting ground in Madras is much less violent and confusing than the removal of an

[1] The *bidi* is an indigenous cigarette.
[2] *Census of India*, 1931, vol. I, p. 52.
[3] *Census of India*, 1931, vol. I, p. 20.
[4] Literally ancient Dravidians. An officially adopted term for members of the Depressed Castes in Madras Presidency.

individual labourer from his village to a 'bustie' or 'chawl' in Calcutta or Bombay. It is perhaps a permissible conjecture that, because of the fact that in South India the gulf fixed between the urban and rural populations is less deep, the influence of a city like Madras upon the rural areas which surround it is more effective, because less violently contrasted, than that of other large Indian cities.

PART I

HISTORY

MADRAS

Clive kissed me on the mouth and eyes and brow,
Wonderful kisses, so that I became
Crowned above Queens—a withered beldame now,
Brooding on ancient fame.

—*Kipling*

CHAPTER II

'CROWNED ABOVE QUEENS'

The Founding of Fort St. George

The visitor to modern Madras may well wonder how it came about that an unfavoured and unpromising tract of bare, sandy shore, almost completely devoid of natural advantages, was chosen as the site for a great city. The choice was fortuitous rather than deliberate and was governed by political rather than geographical considerations.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century the Dutch had a trading establishment at Pulicat, about twenty-five miles north of the present site of Madras. A concession was granted to the English East India Company in the year 1619, in accordance with a clause in the Treaty of London, which permitted the English factors to establish a factory at Pulicat. This arrangement did not prove satisfactory or permanent. Trade jealousies rendered the English and the Dutch uneasy neighbours and the East India Company factors left Pulicat in 1622 to found a factory at Masulipatam—at a safe distance from their 'invetterate and most mallitious enemyes', the Dutch.

The new settlement proved as unsatisfactory as the Pulicat experiment. Masulipatam was situated in the ancient kingdom of Golconda, the officials of which looked with distrust upon the English settlers and behaved towards them with such unfriendliness that the trade of the Company, and doubtless also the private enterprises of the factors, suffered considerably. It is probable that the fault did not lie solely with the Golconda officials, for there are indications that the Englishmen were overbearing in manner and none too scrupulous in the payment of customs duties when evasion proved possible.

Without forsaking Masulipatam the English established another factory at Armagon 'about 40 miles north of Pulicat, where the Armagon Shoal forms the only secure roadstead on the eastern side of India, known now as Blackwood's harbour'.[1] Here also the lack of co-operation by the local

[1] *Census of the Town of Madras*, 1871.

authorities hampered the work of the factors. An official letter to the Company describes the fort at Armagon as 'of noe vallew'. 'It affords at present not a peece of good Cloath, for that Nague[1] soe pills and pols the merchants that they are not able to Comply with their Contracts.' Moreover, most of the indigenous dyeing and weaving centres lay farther south than either Masulipatam or Armagon and this, combined with the unhappy relations with the local officials, led to the determination to find a more suitable berth farther down the coast. In 1639 Francis Day, 'chief of the subordinate factory at Armagon',[2] was sent to look for such a place and found what he was looking for at Madras. A full account of Day's negotiations is contained in a letter from the Masulipatam factors to the Company, dated the 25th of October 1639.[3]

Francis Day was Inordered to go towards St. Thomay, to see what payntings those parts doth afford, and alsoe to see whether any place were fitt to fortifie upon; which accordingly he did. And, the [ ] August last, the said Francis Day, haveinge Dispatcht what hee was sent about, came for this place, and shewes us what hee had Done. And, first, hee makes it appeare to us that at a place Called Madraspatam, neere St. Thomay, the best payntings are made, or as good as anywhere on this Coast, likewise Exellant long Cloath, Morrees, and percalla (of which we have seene Musters), and better Cheape by 20 per cent. than anywhere Else. The Nague of that place is very desirous of our residence there, for hee hath made us very fayre proffers to that Effect; for, first, he proffers to build a forte, in what manner wee please, upon a high plott of ground, adjoyneinge to the sea, where a shipp of any Burthen may ride within Muskett shot; close by a river which is Capeable of a Vessell of 50 Tonns;[4] and, upon possession given us by him, and not before, to pay what Charges hee shall have disbursed. Secondly, hee gives us the whole benifite of a towne neere by for two years, which towne may be at present worth about 2000 pagodas per annum; but after two years, the proceede of that towne to be Equally devided betweene him and us. Thirdly, wee to be custome free continually at the Port of Madraspatam, and, iff wee carry any our Goods through his

[1] The Naik or local ruler.

[2] *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (Provincial Series), 1908, Madras, vol. I, p. 502.

[3] Quoted by Foster, *The Founding of Fort St. George*, pp. 10 and 11.

[4] This is clearly a reference to the Cooum River, a channel of the Palar River which flows to the south of the Fort. The river has changed beyond recognition in the course of the years and is today a sluggish and unsavoury stream, which only finds release to the sea, through its heavily silted estuary, for brief periods during the heaviest of the monsoon rains.

Countray, to pay half the Custome usually [paid?] by other Merchants. Fourthly, wee to Enjoye the priviledge of mintage, without payinge any dutyes. Fivethly, that for all such monyes as wee shall Delliver out to workmen, hee, the said Nague, wilbe liable to make it good, allways provided hee be made acquainted with the delivery. Sixtly, what provisions soever wee shall buy, Either for fort or shippinge, to pay noe dutyes at all. And lastly, if any shipp or vessell shall happen (belongeing to us or our friends) to be cast away upon his Territoryes, all whatever is sav'd upon Démand shall be restor'd.

The bitter memories of Masulipatam and Armagon hastened the acceptance of these 'fayre priviledges'. So eager indeed were the servants of the Company to get to Madras that Francis Day and Andrew Cogan (the Agent on the Coromandel Coast) proceeded with the building of the new fort before the Company had had time either to approve or to disapprove of the project. The Naik, despite the promise reported in the letter quoted above, did not in fact build the fort. 'The Nague hath confest before us that hee never had an intent or did ever promise to build other than with Tody Trees and earth: laying the fault on the Lingua (interpreter) for misunderstandinge of him at the time of treatie.'[1] The factors, however, went on with the building trusting 'to time to justify their proceedings'. The work was commenced in 1640; and thus began, in the reign of Charles I, the first settlement of the English at Madras, and 'the first territorial acquisition by the English in Hindustan'[2]—the founding of Fort St. George.

SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENT OF MADRAS

The first fort was not large. It consisted of 'a tower or house enclosed by a rectangular wall 400 yards long by 100 yards wide with bastions at the four corners'.[3] But soon there collected around it a miscellaneous company of Indian traders, weavers, painters, dyers, etc., who were attracted not only by the prospect of trade but also by the fact that a thirty years' exemption from taxes was granted to those who settled near the fort.[4] 'It is said that within a year after the English settled there arose about 70 to 80 substantial houses on the northern and southern sides of the

[1] Letter written on October 14, 1640, by Cogan and his colleagues; Foster, ibid., p. 13.

[2] Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, vol. I, p. 1.

[3] *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (Provincial Series), 1908, Madras, vol. I, p. 502.

[4] ibid., p. 502.

fort: while in the village of Madraspatnam to the north, nearly 400 families of weavers had come to reside permanently.'[1]

Madras gained rapidly in prestige and standing. Within eighteen months of its foundation it had become the chief factory and the headquarters of the Company on the Coromandel Coast. By the end of the seventeenth century it was 'the chief British settlement in Hindustan and the principal port for European and native goods'.[2]

The political and military history of Fort St. George is full of interest and of incident. For more than 100 years it was a storm centre in South India, and was frequently threatened. Its fortifications were not strong and this fact proved an incentive to the French and, later, to Aurangzeb to attack it, though no conquest was effected until 1746, when La Bourdonnais, the Lieutenant of Dupleix, forced Governor Morse to capitulate and carried him and his council off to Pondicherry.[3] Following this conquest, the French held Madras for three years until, in 1749, under the terms of the Treaty of Aix la Chapelle, it was restored to the English.[4] 'During these three years . . . they pulled down the native and Armenian part of Blacktown,[5] which then clustered close under the north wall, and made a glacis out of the débris.'[6]

In 1759 the city was again besieged by Lally, but strengthened fortifications made possible a successful resistance, and except for a potential danger from the approaches of Haider Ali in 1769 and 1780, Madras remained free from the fear of outside attack until 1914, when the German warship, the *Emden*, shelled the city in the early stages of the Great War.[7] Apart from the explosion of a petrol tank near the harbour the *Emden's* shells did little damage, but the attack caused a panic amongst the people, many of whom fled from the city in terror.

The concern of this chapter is primarily with the growth of the city in population and in area rather than with its

[1] *Official Handbook of the City of Madras* (1933 edition), p. 34. See also Foster, *Founding of Fort St. George*, note on p. 16.

[2] Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, vol. I, p. 9.

[3] *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (Provincial Series), Madras, vol. I, p. 504.

[4] ibid., p. 504.

[5] The name applied to the Indian town to the north of the Fort; later called Georgetown.

[6] ibid., p. 504.

[7] An account of the raid (which took place on September 22, 1914), written from the point of view of the attacker, is to be found in F. Joseph's *Emden* (Herbert Jenkins), n.d., pp. 99-104.

stirring military history. With these very brief allusions to events which were of considerable significance in the acquisition by Britain of her Indian Empire, we must turn to the less spectacular but none the less significant fact that, amid the 'warrs and broyls' which for many years beset the settlement, there was growing up around Fort St. George a steadily expanding urban area.

In its early days the Fort exercised little authority beyond its own walls except in the Blacktown area; but as the cords of urban expansion were lengthened, the stakes of central control were gradually strengthened. Within a radius of five miles around the Fort were numerous villages or small towns which, one after another, came under the authority of the Company. 'Tondiarpet, Pursavākam and Egmore were granted to it in 1693; Veysarpādi, Nangambakkam, Tiruvottiyur and Ennore in 1708; and Vepery, Perambur and Pudupākkam in 1742. Possession of these and other tracts, including St. Thomé, which had been occupied in 1749 to prevent the French getting a footing there, was confirmed by a "farman" of the Mughal Emperor in 1765.'[1]

Because of an 'inexplicable dearth of maps', we do not possess a reliable account of the topography of old Madras.[2] Nor have we any adequate estimate of the population of the town earlier than that of the census of 1871. Several interesting descriptions of Madras in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and estimates of the population of the town have been left by contemporary writers. Thomas Bowrey (c. 1670) in his *Countries Round the Bay of Bengal* estimated the 'native population' at forty thousand. A few years later Dr. John Fryer calculated that there were three hundred English residents in the Fort and three thousand Portuguese, while he placed the figure for the Indian town at thirty thousand. Ten years after Fryer's visit the officers of the Company reported that there were four hundred thousand people in Madras. The methods by which they reached this extraordinary figure are indicated by 'Joseph Hearne, Governor': 'Wee have tryed this truth, not onely by the examination of Captain Heath and many other English, but also by some Serangoes and Lascars, Inhabitants of Madrasse.'[3] These early investigators were not burdened by

[1] *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (Provincial Series), 1908, Madras, vol. I, p. 504.

[2] An account of such maps of Old Madras as are available is given by Colonel Love in his *Vestiges of Old Madras*, and copies of many of them are reproduced in that most valuable work.

[3] Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, vol. I, p. 547.

the nice questions which worry the modern Census Commissioner, but what they lacked in technique they made up in confidence and Joseph Hearne, Governor, had no doubt about the accuracy of his estimate. 'Let no man hereafter be so impudent as to tell us that wee are mistaken.'

Almost one hundred years later (in 1791) the inhabitants of Madraspatnam gave an example of public spirit which later generations of citizens have failed to emulate. They invited the Government to tax them for the defence of the town and described themselves as 'three hundred thousand useful subjects'.

Unreliable as these early estimates of the population of Madras obviously are, they at least indicate that the city had grown with considerable rapidity. A comparison of the maps of different periods makes it possible to picture the manner in which this growth took place. The new settlement at Fort St. George with the equally new commercial appendix to the north (Blacktown), stretched out its tentacles to draw into the web of its business life, the surrounding villages. Over those villages, within a radius of four or five miles, it exercised a dominating influence, and when finally they passed under the authority of the Fort the links made by commerce were greatly strengthened by administrative measures.

This little constellation of villages, the life of which revolved increasingly around the activities of Fort St. George, soon began to expand until it formed a sprawling city of very uneven density of population, but possessing a real unity and most of the characteristics of an urban community. As a result of its manner of development Madras city is exceptional in the way in which, within the municipal limits, entirely urban localities shade off unexpectedly into purely agricultural areas.

It is probable that the fact that the Company occupied Madras not by conquest but by invitation, has influenced the whole subsequent history of Madras Presidency. Pacific and friendly relations existed between the Fort and the country round from the very beginning. The Fort was never subject to attack from the local inhabitants. It may well be that this auspicious beginning of the British connection in Madras has helped to make the history and political evolution of Madras Presidency different from that of the rest of India.

CHAPTER III

'WITHERED BELDAME'

MODERN MADRAS

PROFESSOR PATRICK GEDDES has created a classification of cities into three groups, which has been fairly widely accepted.[1] (1) Primary cities—which are engaged mainly on the direct production of human necessities. (2) Secondary cities—devoted primarily to marketing, warehousing and distribution. (3) Tertiary cities—which are 'in a sense parasitic on the other two groups, springing up for the sake of recreation, health, education, opulent residence and retired leisure, none of which can be perfectly realized amid the hurly-burly of primary and secondary activities'.[2]

Madras city does not fit neatly into any one of these categories. The preponderance of commercial activity should perhaps place it among Professor Geddes' 'secondary cities', but it is also a manufacturing and educational centre and a resort for those who seek 'opulent residence and retired leisure'.

It is of interest and importance to note that the British occupation changed the whole nature of the tendency to town-formation in India. The main factors in the development of modern Indian cities such as seaports, presidency towns and trading and manufacturing centres in the interior have been foreign capital administered by foreigners, the scope given to the talents of the Indian trading classes as well as to the artisan and professional classes, and the centripetal influence of Government headquarters which provide scope for employment in the executive administration and in the law courts. In former times the life of the State revolved around the maintenance of the chief, in practice, if not in theory. The capitals flourished at the expense of the smaller towns and the greater and more lucrative part of the trade of the capital was in arms, ornaments, fine fabrics, etc., which ministered to the demands of the court. A fictitious stimulus of this kind, in goods which were mainly unproductive in the economic sense, could not long survive

[1] See P. Abercrombie, *Sheffield : Civic Survey and Development Plan*, p. 6.

[2] ibid., p. 6.

the regime under which it flourished; and as the old capitals such as Vizianagar, Bijapur and Agra fell into decline, and in some cases decay, new commercial and industrial centres sprang up.

It is still true that a city like Delhi and to a lesser extent some of the presidency towns exist for the administration. But, generally speaking, the most vigorous stimulus to town formation during the British period has come from the new opportunities provided under modern conditions for the trader, the professional and the 'business man' generally.

We can account for the rapid growth of Madras in its early days by:

(1) the fact that the Fort provided a certain security at a time when the country was subject to frequent internal upheaval; and

(2) the attraction of possible trade with the Company to Indian merchants and craftsmen.

This led to a permanent non-rural aggregation near the Fort which, as we have seen, spread steadily outwards to embrace the surrounding villages and form the modern city of Madras. That city in its configuration bears many marks of its origin and subsequent development. It sprawls along the coast of the Bay of Bengal ('in 13°4′N. and 18°15′E.')[1] for a distance of about ten miles, and its municipal boundaries strike inland from the coast in a ragged semi-circular fashion.

Area

The total area of the city is 29·396 square miles.[2] At the centre of the base of this rough semi-circle is Fort St. George. Its ancient military glory is largely departed, and though solid bastions still stand as a reminder of more stirring times, the Fort today contains only a small detachment of troops. It provides, however, a home for the Secretariat of the Government of Madras, and thus remains the headquarters of the Madras Presidency. Around the Fort is a belt of unpopulated territory most of which has been reserved for the use of the military authorities, including on the south-west, the Island—a large tract of open land surrounded by two arms of the river Cooum, which runs through the city in a series of wide loops to enter the sea[3] immediately to

[1] *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1908, vol. XVI, p. 364.
[2] *Administration Report of the Corporation of Madras*, 1933-4, p. 2.
[3] The mouth of the Cooum is silted up, so that the river forms a salt lagoon for the greater part of the year, the sand bar being broken only in the rainy season.

the south of Fort St. George. Immediately outside this zone, which surrounds the Fort and separates it from the city proper, lie the most densely populated areas of Madras, and beyond those areas an outer semi-circular fringe of what may be roughly described as suburban areas. The irregular distribution of the city's population is largely accounted for by the fact that Madras is made up of three or four distinct urban units and many little villages—the whole held loosely together by a web of communications which radiate from Fort St. George outwards towards the circumference with, of course, many intersecting roads and streets.

The site of Madras city is very low and very level. The greater part of its surface is alluvial[1] and at no point does it rise more than twenty-five feet above sea-level. It is 'intersected by two languid streams', the Cooum, to which reference has already been made, and the Adyar which forms the southern boundary of the city. The Buckingham Canal is an odorous channel running 'from the Krishna river in the north to the neighbourhood of Pondicherry in the south',[2] and passing through Madras parallel with the coast. Its importance has diminished with the development of railway transport, but it is still used extensively for the carrying of firewood to Madras from the Casuarina plantations to the north and south of the city. As the canal is very shallow ('the usual depth of water is from 2½ to 3½ feet')[3] the boats are necessarily small and cargoes light.

COMMUNICATIONS

The communications of Madras city have already been described as a web radiating from Fort St. George. From the Fort to San Thomé, which lies about two miles to the south, there runs the Marina, a fine coastal road, flanked on its western side by several stately public buildings, which enjoy an uninterrupted view of the sea. This handsome thoroughfare was constructed during the governorship of Sir M. E. Grant Duff, who, in a letter written shortly after the making of the road, reveals the origin of the name which it now bears:

'We have greatly benefited Madras', he wrote, 'by . . . turning the rather dismal beach of five years ago into one of

[1] 'The subsoil consists of sand in the eastern half of the city and clay or sand and clay mixed in the western portion. Large quantities of subsoil water are encountered within a few feet of the ground surface at all times of the year. *Official Handbook*, 1933, p. 108.

[2] *Official Handbook of the City of Madras*, 1933, p. 49.

[3] ibid., p. 49.

the most beautiful promenades in the world. From old Sicilian recollections, I gave in 1884 to our new creation the name of the Marina; and I was not a little amused when, walking there last winter with the Italian general Saletta, he suddenly said to me "On se dirait à Palerme ".'[1]

There can be no doubt that Madras has been 'greatly benefited' by the construction of the Marina. It has become one of the chief lungs of the city frequented in the late afternoon and evening by thousands of people, who pour out from hot and stuffy streets and offices in quest of cooling breezes from the sea. The amenities of the Marina might, however, be greatly increased by careful and judicious development.

Northwards from the Fort a road, which is a continuation of the Marina, swings round past the High Court Buildings to join First Line Beach, the thoroughfare which skirts the eastern side of Georgetown and on which are found many large mercantile offices and warehouses. To the east of First Line Beach is the Harbour. First Line Beach and the Marina form the coastal base of the semi-circle which is Madras, and from the Fort two other main radii strike outwards towards the circumference—the Mount Road and the Poonamallee High Road. The Mount Road—so called because it leads direct to St. Thomas' Mount, some six miles to the south-west of the city—crosses the Island, and skirting the edge of Government House grounds, broadens out into a fine straight arterial road flanked by important shops and business houses, passes through some crowded bazaar streets to the area of handsome garden houses in Teynampet and thence out into the open country. The Poonamallee High Road, a more congested and less attractive thoroughfare, runs straight through the middle of the city in a westerly direction. Other important streets are the China Bazaar Road and the Esplanade, which form the southern boundary of Georgetown, and Popham's Broadway, which runs directly north parallel with First Line Beach.

Prior to the advent of modern modes of travel residents in the city depended for means of transport mainly upon the rickshaw, the jutka and the horse-carriage; and even today when the city is provided with electric tramways and motor-bus services, and increasing numbers of people own private cars, the rickshaw and the jutka retain a not unimportant place in the provision of public transport and, though the

[1] *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (Provincial Series), 1908, Madras, vol. I, p. 499, footnote.

old horse-carriage has fallen on evil days, it may occasionally be seen in the streets of Madras. The rickshaw is a small two-wheeled gig, pulled by a coolie, and it is normally supposed to seat only one person, though it is not uncommon to see a wretched coolie struggling along with two heavy adults in his vehicle.[1] Many families own private rickshaws, though the number seems to be declining and the majority of rickshaws in Madras city are licensed for public hire. It is a cheap but slow method of transport and involves a type of human labour which is open to serious criticism. A sensitive person can hardly ride with comfort behind the strained and sweating back of a fellow human being, or feel justified in thus employing him as a beast of burden.[2]

The jutka is a light two-wheeled vehicle with a high, rectangular boarded floor and a light roof-covering. It is normally drawn by a pony, though in some cases bullocks are used. It provides an exceedingly uncomfortable means of transport, but is still fairly widely used in Madras where many jutkas are available for public hire. It is surprising that the jutka has never been displaced by the more rationally designed 'tonga' of Northern India.[3]

The carriages most commonly used in Madras in former times were of the four-wheeled landau type drawn by one (or sometimes two) horses. They have been almost entirely displaced by the motor car.

The city is provided with a rather limited electric tramway service. There were, in 1932, $8\frac{3}{4}$ miles of double track and $7\frac{1}{4}$ miles of single track over which tram cars operated.[4] The service is provided by the Madras Electric Tramways (1904) Ltd. Two main routes run from the south to the north of the city and there are a few minor routes which operate towards the west over strictly limited tracks. The tramways are used by large numbers of people, but they are quite inadequate to serve the needs of a city which has spread far beyond the range of the present tramway system. It may be doubted whether, in a city where many of the streets are

[1] This is now prohibited.

[2] This raises a rather difficult moral issue, since to refuse to ride in a rickshaw may deprive the coolie, who has no alternative means of livelihood, of the chance of earning a living!

[3] An Indian friend of the writer's attempted to introduce the tonga to a South Indian town by purchasing one for the use of his family, but merely succeeded in gaining a reputation for eccentricity and providing the youth of the town with the amusing diversion of following this strange vehicle when it went abroad!

[4] *Official Handbook of the City of Madras*, 1933, p. 154.

inconveniently and often dangerously narrow, tramcars are, under modern conditions, a suitable form of transport at all.

The development of motor-bus services helps to meet the need for cheap passenger transport within the city, which the tramways could not meet. The bus services are privately owned, mainly by small companies or private individuals, and lack of capital (combined with keen competition) results in a marked lack of efficient organization. The police authorities have endeavoured to regulate bus traffic but their powers are necessarily limited to the task of reducing congestion on the various routes by ensuring regular starting intervals. But there is an obvious need for more efficient organization of this very important branch of the passenger transport services—an organization which could perhaps best be achieved either by direct municipal control or by the creation of an *ad hoc* passenger transport board made responsible for the provision of efficient services on all the main routes of the city and for the co-ordination of the bus and tramway services to this end.

There are two main railway terminii in Madras—the Central Station of the Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway and the Egmore Station of the South Indian Railway. The electrification of the South Indian line for a distance of eighteen miles outside Madras city is a new enterprise which is likely to have an increasing effect upon the development of the city. A number of new stations have been erected in connection with the electric train service and this suburban track serves an area within the city and on its outskirts which is capable of considerable residential development. The electrified line strikes westward through the city from First Line Beach, passing through the residential area of Egmore, and then turns almost due south, skirting the edge of the recent town extension area of Mambalam and thence through Saidapet, St. Thomas' Mount to Tambaram. The tendency of recent years for the 'greater Madras' area to develop rapidly on the southern side of the city is likely to be still further accelerated by this new provision of cheap and speedy transport.

THE HARBOUR

Madras possesses no natural harbour and the present artificial construction has been described by its creator, Sir Francis Spring, as 'a challenge flaunted in the face of

nature'.[1] An attempt was made in 1862 to meet the 'serious disadvantage of the absence of any natural harbour at a port where the surf is continual',[2] by the construction of a screw-pile pier. In 1876 work was begun on a harbour sufficiently large 'to hold nine steamers from 3,000 to 7,000 tons'[3] and when it was nearing completion in 1881 a devastating cyclone '"washed away half a mile of the breakwaters, threw the two top courses of concrete blocks into the harbour, hurled over two of the Titan cranes used on the works, lowered and spread out the rubble base of the breakwaters, and washed away one and a half miles of construction railway'.[4] Undeterred by this disaster the engineers, after consultation with 'a committee of English experts', returned to the fray. In 1884 building was begun again and in 1896 a harbour 'on practically the original design'[5] was completed. It was 'just two walls, shaped like the jaws of a pincers, running out into the sea',[6] with the entrance, 500 feet in width, facing eastwards. But nature had another weapon in reserve with which to meet the 'challenge'—less dramatic than the cyclone, but exceedingly troublesome. Surf-driven sand accumulated from the south and silted up the harbour entrance, and it became necessary to close the eastern gateway, and a new entrance was made in the north-east corner of the harbour and protected by a breakwater which projected on the sea-side to the north of this new harbour mouth. This arrangement has proved satisfactory up to the present; and Madras has thus been provided with a well-equipped harbour which encloses 200 acres of calm water, of a depth at the entrance of about 37 feet at high water and about 34 feet at lower water.[7]

The trade of the port is said to have 'increased enormously during recent years'. 'Nearly 900 steamers of an average net registered tonnage of 3,700 tons enter and leave the harbour yearly, and the total tonnage of cargo handled amounts to 1,500,000 tons.' The total value of the trade of the port amounts to about £35,000,000 annually.[8] The affairs

[1] J. C. Molony, *A Book of South India* (Methuen), 1926, p. 17.
[2] *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (Provincial Series), 1908, Madras, vol. I, p. 510.
[3] ibid., p. 510.
[4] ibid., pp. 510 and 511.
[5] ibid.
[6] J. C. Molony, *A Book of South India*, p. 16.
[7] *Official Handbook of the City of Madras*, 1933, p. 150.
[8] ibid., p. 152.

of the port are administered by the Madras Port Trust Board.

The steady growth of the large sand accretion to the south of the Harbour may in the future create very difficult problems for the engineer and greatly increase the expense of maintaining the harbour. The development of a large harbour at Cochin on the south-west coast and of a fine natural harbour at Vizagapatam in the north of Madras Presidency may result in a serious diminution of the sea-borne trade of Madras, though it is, as yet, too early to form any estimates or make any predictions as to the effects of these two important developments upon Madras city.

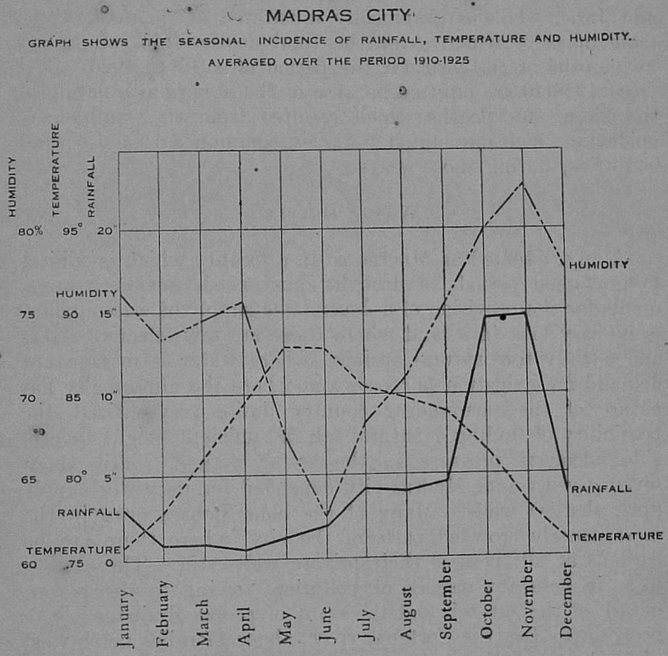
Climate and Rainfall

Madras has been described as 'the pleasantest dwelling place in the East';[1] but its charm lies in its wide open spaces, its unusual combination of the urban and the rural, its unique garden-houses and the genial friendliness and humour of the South Indian people, rather than in its climate. It is hot and humid for nine months of the year, and still hotter for the remaining three months. The mean temperature for the coolest months (December and January) is about 76° and for the hottest months (May and June) about 90°. This latter figure is moderate when compared with the hot weather temperatures of Northern India. But the cold weather figures in the north are in most places much lower than in Madras. The comparatively equable nature of the climate of Madras results in a very high mean temperature for the year of 83°.[2].

The 1908 edition of the *Imperial Gazetteer* contains annual rainfall figures based on calculations made over a period of 85 years. The average annual rainfall is estimated at 49 inches 'of which 29½ inches are received during the north-east monsoon from October to December, and 15 inches from June to September in the south-west monsoon. The heaviest recorded fall during this period was 88 inches in 1827, and the smallest 18 inches in 1832, the year before the Guntur famine.'[3]

[1] J. C. Molony, *A Book of South India* (Methuen), 1926, p. 15.
[2] *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (Provincial Series), 1908, Madras, vol. I, p. 501.
[3] ibid., p. 501.

The following graph indicates the seasonal incidence of rainfall, temperature and humidity averaged over a period of 15 years.



From Report of the City High Mortality Committee, Madras, 1927. Part II

The census report on Madras city for 1871 described the climate as 'on the whole, favourable to the health of the native inhabitants'.[1] There is no doubt, however, that the mortality rates are affected by changes in climate, and though

[1] *Census of the Town of Madras*, 1871, p. 67.

Madras is less subject to sudden alternations of heat and cold than many other parts of India, it is in the months when the temperature is lower and the humidity and rainfall higher that the largest numbers of deaths occur, and the death-rates are at their minimum during the dry, hot months of May and June. This is graphically illustrated at the foot of the table opposite which gives the total deaths from all causes by months of the year for the period of 1910 to 1926. The years 1918-19 are omitted because of the abnormal inflation of the figures for deaths which resulted from the 'influenza' epidemic which devastated India, in common with most other countries, during those years.

WATER SUPPLY

A city, situated as Madras is, in a locality which is subject to prolonged periods of drought must needs devise arrangements for the provision of a dependable supply of water. This is no easy task in a land where there are few effective rivers and equally few natural springs, where water is in constant demand for irrigation purposes and where the abnormally flat nature of the surrounding country limits very strictly the possibility of finding a natural fall of sufficient height to provide adequate pressure in the water mains. Until about seventy years ago, Madras city depended for its water supply upon shallow wells. Many of the older houses even in the most densely crowded parts of the city, where there are no gardens at all, possess their private wells still. These wells were in constant danger of pollution 'owing to the porous nature of the sub-soil and the want of proper drainage'.[1] A proposal to dam the Corteliar river, about 17 miles north-west of Madras and divert the water to storage lakes which would supply the city was adopted in 1866. A weir was erected on the Corteliar river at Dhamarambakkam and the water carried to Sholavaram and Red Hills where storage tanks were constructed to retain it.[2] These tanks 'also receive a considerable supply from the Catchment areas to the extent of 140 square miles that drain directly to them and to the supply channels'.[3] In addition to providing the water supply for Madras city, these reservoirs are drawn upon for irrigation to the extent of about 500 million cubic feet per annum.[4]

[1] *Official Handbook of the City of Madras*, 1933, p. 143.
[2] ibid., p. 143.
[3] ibid., p. 143.
[4] ibid., p. 143.

Total deaths from all Causes in 1910-1926 by months of the Year.

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
TOTAL LESS 1918 - 19	30,440	28,241	27,609	24,494	24,757	22,253	23,343	27,690	26,285	27,217	27,299	30,974

'The average quantity issued to the city per annum for the ten years ending 31st March 1929 was 5,831 million gallons which is equivalent to 933 million cubic feet per annum.'[1]

The quality of the water supply has given serious concern to the city authorities for many years, and plant for chlorination and for filtration has been installed at Kilpauk, a western suburb of the city, and also a pumping system to secure an adequate supply of water under sufficient pressure.

A rising population and a consequent increase in the daily consumption of water has given urgency to the question of quantity, and various steps to ensure the future adequacy of the city's supply of water are under discussion.

Drainage

The flat and lowlying nature of the site of Madras city renders drainage very difficult.

Surface drainage is complicated by the uneven distribution of the rainfall, the 'wet season' during the north-east monsoon being marked by heavy rainstorms which discharge a volume of water so great that the ordinary surface drains cannot carry it away quickly enough to avert flooding in low-lying areas. Mr. J. C. Molony, who was President of the Corporation of Madras for five years, describes how in Moore Street in the Georgetown area ('well nigh the lowest point of the city'), 'when the monsoon rains fall, a flood pours down the street', and how, 'considering the matter of a drain to carry away this flood', he has 'stood waist high in water'.[2] The present writer has seen some of the main thoroughfares of the city (e.g. China Bazaar Road and the Esplanade) full of abandoned motor vehicles, with the flood water almost covering their bonnets. He has also seen many times the homes of hut-dwellers in the slums of the city completely flooded out and often rased to the ground, while their occupants stood in wet loin cloths waiting with astonishing patience and philosophic detachment for an overworked fire-engine to come and pump the flood-water away. Flooding of this kind is not exceptional. It is a normal, annual occurrence in some parts of the city. Adequate measures for the mitigation of flooding have not yet been contrived, though in 1933 the Corporation adopted a scheme for the purpose at

[1] *Official Handbook of the City of Madras*, 1933, p. 143.
[2] J. C. Molony, *A Book of South India*, 1926, p. 18.

an estimated cost of Rs. 3·26 lakhs,[1] which should in the future reduce the danger of serious flooding in the city.

The presence of sub-soil water near the ground surface has made the construction of an underground sewerage system difficult. Some twenty-five years ago a scheme was devised for sewering the city, the execution of which, though not yet complete, is now well advanced and is being extended year by year. This scheme depends upon a system of pumping stations to which the street sewers gravitate and carry the sewage from the houses, which is then pumped into a cast-iron main and conveyed to the city sewage farm in the north-eastern corner of the city. This farm is 100 acres in extent and can absorb only one-fifth of the available sewage for irrigation, the other four-fifths being released into the sea.[2]

This underground drainage system does not provide for the disposal of surface water, though in the heavy rains some storm water does enter the sewers; the bulk of the surface water and storm water is carried by 'the road-side ditches and old masonry drains into the nearest water course, such as the Otteri Nullah, the Cooum and the Buckingham Canal'.[3]

The sewering of the city will make possible the abolition of the primitive and repulsive methods of scavenging whereby men and women have been employed in the collection and disposal of human excreta. The Corporation has, with commendable zeal, pressed forward a project for the compulsory provision of flush-out latrines in all houses which are served by the underground sewerage system. The completion of this most desirable and necessary sanitary reform must inevitably have a favourable effect upon the health of the city, and it will in addition release many men and women from one of the most revolting tasks that any human being could be asked to perform.

Industry and Occupation

It has already been indicated that the city of Madras owes its origin to political rather than economic causes. Prior to the development of steam transport its geographical position was not a handicap. It was as suitable as any other centre on the surf-bound Coromandel coast for trading, and in fact

[1] *Administration Report of the Corporation of Madras*, 1933-4, p. 24.
[2] *Official Handbook of the City of Madras*, 1933, p. 108.
[3] ibid., p. 109.

enjoyed special advantages in the friendly co-operation of the local traders and in its proximity to the centres of indigenous industry. These industries flourished up to the middle of last century and Madras was then a centre of greater industrial importance than it is today. When the East India Company ceased its trading functions, these passed mainly into the hands of European firms, organized on the managing agency system, for whom trade proved more remunerative than manufacture. The Industrial Revolution in the west inflicted irreparable injury upon the indigenous industries, while increasing the demand for raw materials. The Madras houses of agency soon became *media* mainly for the export of raw materials and the import of manufactured goods.

When the Industrial Revolution spread eastwards and invaded India, Madras had lost its former political supremacy and the revolution struck its roots more deeply in Calcutta and Bombay where conditions were more favourable, and while these two cities grew rapidly in size and industrial importance Madras languished (in Kipling's phrase) like

'a withered beldame now,
brooding on ancient fame.'

Madras' industrial backwardness in modern times is accounted for mainly by the absence of a convenient supply of fuel, which is essential to the establishment of modern industries. 'The nearest coalfield is at Singareni in the Nizam's dominions, but the bulk of its output goes west, and the coal supply of Madras is mainly obtained from Bengal, either by rail or sea.'[1]

There are, however, a few large cotton mills in Madras. The Buckingham & Carnatic Mills, situated in Perambur—a north-western suburb of the city—were founded by Messrs. Binny & Co., over fifty years ago. These mills 'stand on the only channel (and that a poor one) available for industry, the Otteri Nullah'.[2] They give employment to about 10,000 hands and have rightly won widespread commendation for the admirable provision made for the health, recreation and education of their work-people and their children. One other cotton mill was established under Indian ownership about the same period. These three textile factories were all begun 'between 1874 and 1883' and 'spin yarn and weave cotton cloths of various descriptions'.[3]

[1] *Census Report : City of Madras,* 1911, p. 16.
[2] J. C. Molony, *A Book of South India,* p. 19.
[3] *Imperial Gazetteer of India,* 1908, vol. XVI, p. 375.

The textile factories are at once the largest and most important of Madras industries, both from the point of view of the labour force which they employ and of the output of goods. There are, however, many other organized industries carried on under what are technically 'factory' conditions (i.e. they use power and employ more than 20 hands), but the greater number of them are engaged in supplying the local needs of the community and are such as could be found in almost every large city. Of somewhat wider commercial significance are the tanneries, which have made Madras a very important centre of the leather trade, an aluminium factory and a recently established match factory. There has also been a marked tendency in recent years, stimulated and assisted by the tariffs, towards the growth of small-scale industries. Notable among these are the large numbers of *bidi* factories where cheap indigenous cigarettes (bidis) are manufactured by hand and exported in considerable quantities. Also of importance in the attraction and employment of industrial labour are the engineering and locomotive workshops of the Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway, which are situated in Perambur.

There are many who predict with confidence a great development in the industrial life of India in the future. 'During recent years the government of India has taken various steps to relieve the agriculturalists of their severe burden of fixed charges, to promote rural development, to regulate the export trade, and to protect Indian industry. Industrial output has increased even during the depression; the production of Indian cotton mills increased 50 per cent. between 1928-9 and 1933-4, the production of sugar increased six-fold in the last six years, and there have been similar increases in the production of iron and steel, cement and other industrial products. Thus India has survived the economic blizzard and stands ready for a great economic development.'[1]

If this prediction is justified by future events, as it may well be, there is no great likelihood that Madras will be in the van of the new industrial progress or that the city will change its essential character as a distributing rather than a manufacturing centre. Many of the handicaps to industrial development from which Madras has suffered in the past will remain. Nevertheless there are signs that Madras Presidency may witness an increase in industrial activity in the future.

[1] *The Economist*, December 14, 1935, p. 1194.

'The south Indian, especially the Tamil, takes kindly to the use of machinery and considerable industrial development is an undoubted possibility. The great lack of the presidency in the past has been cheap power. A beginning has been made in the systematic use of water power resources and it may be that in this will be found the stimulus long lacking to a marked forward step in industrial development. What might be termed the social uses of electric power are steadily advancing in popularity. The ten years (1921-31) have seen many towns in the presidency develop from oil lamps or no lamps at all to electric lighting and fans. This tendency is not likely to diminish; on the contrary, the signs are all the other way.'[1]

In attempting a survey, however brief, of the occupations other than the strictly industrial group dealt with above, we are confronted with 'quite the most troublesome and complicated return called for on the census schedule'.[2] In the 1931 census of Madras city changes were made in the method of enumeration which render any comparison with previous census figures valueless if not impossible and, as 'a measure of retrenchment' the tabulation of the full details returned on the question of occupation was not undertaken.[3] The report does, however, contain summaries, which give a general picture of the chief occupations followed by the citizens of Madras.

The table on page 29 extracted from the 1931 Census Report gives 'the numbers actually practising the chief Madras occupations with ratio figures taken to the total city earners of the same sex'.

The large preponderance in the table of insufficiently described occupations is an indication of the difficulty of securing reliable occupational statistics in India. But these figures give a general picture of the main means of subsistence of the population of Madras city. They illustrate very clearly the relatively unimportant place which highly organized industrial and factory labour holds in Madras.

In Bombay, for instance, there were in 1921 '85 cotton spinning and weaving factories employing a daily average of 146,000 persons.'[4] In Ahmedabad there were in the same year 68 cotton mills with 55,000 workers. Madras' paltry 7,000 cotton operatives seems of minor importance in

[1] *Census of India,* 1931, vol. XIV, pp. 46-7.
[2] ibid., vol. I, p. 273.
[3] *Census Tables : City of Madras,* 1931, pp. 17 and 18.
[4] Burnett Hurst, *Labour and Housing in Bombay* (P. S. King).

TABLE[1]

Occupation	Actual numbers earners		Per 1000 earners	
	Males	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*
Cotton spinning, sizing and weaving	6,253	788	32	28
Carpenters, turners, joiners, etc.	4,440	10	23	...
Blacksmiths and other iron workers	1,533	46	8	2
Potters, etc.	284	63	1	2
Grain parchers	197	150	1	5
Toddy Drawers	1,097	...	6	...
Tobacco manufacture ...	3,331	433	17	16
Tailors, etc.	3,606	128	18	5
Barbers	1,618	6	8	...
Lime burners, masons, etc ...	4.710	108	24	4
Heat, light, electricity, etc. ...	1,113	7	6	...
Printers, etc.	5,130	12	26	...
Jewellery, etc., makers ...	4,709	21	24	1
Scavenging	1,662	1,328	8	48
Transport by water ...	4,028	210	20	8
,, road ...	10,898	398	55	14
,, rail	5,108	348	26	12
Bankers, moneylenders, etc. ...	1,802	172	9	6
Piecegoods trade	2,410	44	12	2
Hotels and trade in food-stuffs	11,661	3,341	59	119
Miscellaneous trade ...	8,154	690	41	25
Police	2,628	...	13	...
Service of State	6,319	18	32	1
Law	1,428	...	7	...
Medicine	2,010	911	10	33
Teachers, etc.	3,166	1,430	16	51
Living on income	3,908	1,408	20	50
Private motor drivers ...	2,473	3	13	...
Domestic Service	10,157	4,443	52	159
General labourers	21,484	6,500	109	232
Insufficiently described, Clerks, Mechanics, etc.	23,457	187	119	7
Beggars and vagrants ...	1,204	374	6	13

comparison, and there is in Madras no other large 'industrial' group.

The occupations of the female section of the earning population of the city are of special interest. 'General

[1] *Census Tables : City of Madras*, 1931, p. 18.

labour' absorbs much the largest proportion of the total women wage earners, almost 25 per cent., while next in importance is domestic service, with trade in food-stuffs following hard behind.

The professions of teaching and medicine each claims a fairly large number of women earners, but 'medicine' includes nurses and midwives as well as doctors. Scavenging stands high in the list 'indicating the important part taken by women in this humble and necessary occupation.'

Among male occupations 'general labour' also absorbs the largest proportion, if the 'insufficiently described' are excluded. About 11 per cent. of the male earners are general labourers. 'Hotels and trade in food-stuffs employ 5·9 per cent., transport by road 5·5 and domestic service 5·2. All other contributions fall below this percentage and nearly every occupation in the list finds some male in Madras city to practise it.'[1]

Language, Caste and Religion

Every great seaport town tends to be cosmopolitan and polyglot, and Madras is no exception. Groups representing many different languages and tongues may be found there. The bulk of the people, however, speak one or other of the great Dravidian languages. The two main languages of the Madras Presidency are Tamil and Telugu.[2] Broadly speaking the Tamil area may be described as lying south of a line drawn westwards from Madras city and the Telugu area lies to the north of this line. Actually, of course, the frontiers of a language area cannot be thus sharply defined, for the areas shade into one another and it is usual for a considerable bilingual belt to be found between the more clearly defined language groups. The city of Madras lies on this rough frontier between the Tamil and the Telugu country, and though the mother-tongue of the majority of its inhabitants is Tamil, Telugu is widely spoken, and many have a working knowledge of both languages. English has been superimposed as the language of government, the Law Courts and Commerce, and there is a remarkably high percentage of literacy in English amongst the people of Madras.

[1] *Census Tables: City of Madras*, 1931, p. 18.

[2] Malayalam is spoken on the west coast and Kanarese in South Kanara and the borders of Mysore State.

The following table shows the 'mother-tongue composition per 1,000 of the city population for the chief vernaculars' as it appeared in the 1931 census figures.

Tamil (Dravidian)	636
Telugu (Dravidian)	196
Hindustani (Sanscritic)	97
English	21
Malayalam (Dravidian)	14
Marathi (Sanscritic)	12
Kanarese (Dravidian)	7
Saurashtri (Sanscritic)	4
Hindi (Sanscritic)	4
Marwari (Sanscritic)	1

Tamil is thus the mother-tongue of nearly two-thirds of the population of the city, while Telugu is the spoken language of one-fifth of the homes and Hindustani of one-tenth.

The census report for 1931 contains a lengthy table[1] indicating the caste, tribe or race of the population of Madras in which there are ninety-nine different sections (including those who returned themselves as belonging to 'no caste' and 'others'). An attempt will be made at a later stage to interpret the complexities of the situation created by the impact of urban life upon the system of caste. Here the interesting fact may be pointed out that more than an eighth of the entire population of Madras city and a sixth of its Hindu population belongs to one or other of the various categories of 'depressed classes'. Of these, the Adi-Dravidas alone number 63,388.

The population of European and allied races in Madras city numbered, in 1931, 3,581 and is distributed as follows:

	British subjects	*Others*
Persons	3,239	342
Males	2,094	224
Females	1,145	118

The distribution of the population by religious communities is set out in the accompanying table on page 32.

'The city percentage of Hindus is less than that of the province as a whole and that of Muslims and Christians is greater. Minorities generally favour towns and Madras illustrates this.'[2]

[1] *Census Tables: City of Madras*, 1931, pp. 50-1.
[2] ibid., p. 11.

MADRAS CITY

Population by religious communities

Date	HINDUS	Increase or Decrease	MUSSALMANS	Increase or Decrease	CHRISTIANS	Increase or Decrease	OTHERS	Increase or Decrease	TOTAL	Increase or Decrease
1881	315,527	...	50,298	...	39,631	...	392	...	405,848	...
1891	358,997	+ 43,470	53,184	+ 2,886	39,742	+ 111	595	+ 203	452,518	+ 46,670
1901	410,648	+ 51,651	57,331	+ 4,147	40,958	+ 1,216	409	− 186	509,346	+ 56,828
1911	415,910	+ 5,262	59,169	+ 1,838	41,812	+ 854	1,769	+ 1,360	518,660	+ 9,314
1921	427,722	+ 11,812	53,163	− 6,006	44,136	+ 2,324	1,890	+ 121	526,911	+ 8,251
1931	520,176	+ 92,454	70,031	+ 16,868	54,114	+ 9,978	2,909	+ 1,019	647,230	+ 120,319

The ratios of the three main religious groups per 1,000 of the population are:

	Per 1,000
Hindu	802
Muslim	108
Christian	83

Between 1921 and 1931 the Mussalmans increased by 31·7 per cent., the Christians by 22·6 per cent. and the Hindus by 21·6 per cent., while the percentage increase in the whole population of the city was 22·8.

'The notably higher rate for Muslims is a presidency feature and a greater increase for Christians too is general. To some extent conversion operates to swell the increase ratios but the two smaller communities have regularly a higher juvenile proportion in their numbers and circumstances of differential fertility are apparent. These, however, are probably more social than religious in origin, reflecting the different proportions in which lower social strata are represented in the three groups.'[1]

City Government

The city of Madras is divided into forty administrative divisions[2] and municipal affairs are under the control of a council consisting of not more than sixty-eight members. Of these, forty-five are divisional councillors and five are aldermen. The divisional councillors represent the forty administrative divisions together with special Adi-Dravida and Labour constituencies. Three special councillors may be appointed by the Local Government, and the remaining fifteen seats are reserved for the election of the representatives of certain specified interests in the city.

The Council elects annually a Mayor, Deputy-Mayor and six Standing Committees.

The chief executive officer of the Council is known as the Commissioner. He is appointed by the Local Government and is not a member of the council.

The other executive officers are appointed by the council, according to certain statutory provisions contained in the Madras City Municipal Act,[3] subject to which they are under the direct control of the council.

[1] *Census Tables: City of Madras*, 1931, p. 11.
[2] By a recent amendment of the City Municipal Act.
[3] See Madras Act IV of 1919 (as modified up to 15th May 1936).

PART II

POPULATION

CHAPTER IV

THE MOVEMENT OF POPULATION

THE CENSUS REPORTS

THE first attempt to enumerate the peoples of India was made in 1871 and since that date a regular decennial census has been taken. In a country so vast in area, so numerous in population, so diverse in race and language and where, despite the high cultural attainment of a small minority, the mass of the people remain totally illiterate and proportionately inaccurate, the difficulties which beset the path of reliability in the census returns are formidable. In some south Indian villages the idiom commonly employed to fix the time of day at which an event occurred indicates that it happened when 'the sun was so many palmyra trees high in the heavens'. Such rudimentary notions of exactness are common, and are hardly calculated to help those who hold them to give an accurate account of themselves and their families. Furthermore, 'in India, as in America, the machinery of the population census is organized hastily before the census and disbanded after the publication is complete. A new Commissioner is appointed for each occasion, who can only profit by the experience of his predecessors so far as their published reports or any special memoranda left behind by them enable him to do so, and who has no time to organize any far-reaching improvement. The subordinate staff[1] is for the most part inexperienced in the work, which is in fact of a highly specialized character. In the circumstances the Indian census is a quite astonishing achievement, but it is overweighted with dead matter which no one has the leisure to

[1] Mr. W. Francis, author of the Census Report for Madras Presidency in 1901, tells of some strange entries which appeared in the preliminary enumeration of that year. 'One enumerator modestly wrote himself down in the schedule as "illiterate", which in census phraseology means "unable to read and write". Another entered particulars for a saint buried in an ancient tomb and pleaded in excuse the common belief in the neighbourhood that the holy man was still alive within his shrine. A third, finding a census number on the village temple, boldly enumerated the God inside it:—"Name, Ganesha; religion, Hindu; sex, male; civil condition, married; age, about 200 years; means of subsistence, offerings from the villagers." etc.' (*Census of India*, 1901, vol. XV, Madras Presidency Report, part I, p. 3.)

devise methods of excising, while on the other hand it gathers fruits of living knowledge which no one has the leisure to prepare for the table.'[1]

The Indian census reports provide a great mass of data. The investigator is almost overwhelmed with the abundance rather than the paucity of the information provided. Yet at many critical points information is either entirely lacking or has to be abstracted with great labour from a mass of more or less irrelevant detail contained in the tables. A detailed comparative study of the movement of population is rendered very difficult, and in some aspects quite impossible, by frequent changes in methods of enumeration and tabulation of data.

The census returns of the Madras Presidency are generally regarded as trustworthy. Prior to 1871, quinquennial enumerations of population had been undertaken by the Government of Madras, and the people of the presidency were more accustomed to the machinery of the census and less suspicious of the motives of the authorities than were the inhabitants of other provinces. There is, therefore, reason to believe that the information obtained in the earlier census enumerations in Madras was more reliable than in the case of areas where the whole idea of the census was a novelty. That reliability, however, is only relative, and some of the early estimates of the population of Madras city were, as we have already seen, based on guesswork rather than on careful enumeration. As late as 1863, Sir Charles Trevelyan, who had been Governor of Madras, is alleged to have informed the Royal Sanitary Commission that the people of Madras city numbered 'not less than one million'.[2]

There appears to have been an actual enumeration in 1822, when the population was estimated at 462,051. Of this census the author of the Report for 1871 remarks laconically: 'Probably the conicopolies[3] were paid by the number of persons they were supposed to enumerate.'

By 1871, however, census returns in Madras were assuming a tolerable measure of accuracy and in the city, at least, little difficulty was experienced in securing information. The most stupid and least public-spirited section of the community appears to have been found amongst the

[1] Bowley and Robertson, *A Scheme for an Economic Census of India* (New Delhi), 1934, pp. 1 and 2.
[2] *Census of the Town of Madras*, 1871, p. 13.
[3] Accountants or enumerators.

European residents, some of whom, with a delicious if somewhat troublesome *naïveté*, regarded it as an impertinence that they should be called upon to answer the same questions 'as were put to the Indian population'. 'Some took the schedul but did not return it. A few wrote vulgar remarks on th schedule.'[1] The Census Superintendent proceeded unab ed to threaten the terrors of the law upon all such, and s n even the most recalcitrant meekly filled his schedule and enumeration was duly completed.

T Report on the City of Madras, published after the censu f 1871 is the most detailed of the whole series of census reports on the city. Subsequent changes in methods of collecting and tabulating data for the census have made the task of abstracting comparable figures from the tables often very complicated and sometimes quite impossible. All the reports contain a mass of material comprising elements of every degree of validity. For the purposes of this study of the population of the city only the more trustworthy of the available statistics have been used. Where comparison is apt to be misleading, the attempt to compare has been abandoned; where figures are obviously unreliable (e.g. early figures for births and deaths) they have not been used; and where statistics of possibly questionable validity are employed warnings against misleading deductions are given at the appropriate points. Thus, the attempt to achieve a complete analysis of the constituent elements of the population, which might be both superficial and misleading, has been abandoned, and a less ambitious enquiry based on the more trustworthy data available has been made.

General Movement of Population

The tables on page 40 make possible a comparison of the growth of the city with the movement of the population in the presidency of Madras and in India as a whole.

These figures indicate that the growth of the city has been continuous, if somewhat erratic, over the whole period (1871-1931), as has been the growth of the population in Madras Presidency and in India as a whole. The accessions to the city population from decade to decade are entirely artificial, being due to immigration and not to natural increase. The table[2] on page 41 which gives vital statistics for four

[1] *Census of the Town of Madras,* 1871, pp. 10-11.
[2] *Census Tables for the City of Madras,* 1931, p. 3.

Growth of Population

Date	Population of Madras City	Per cent. increase	Absolute increase	Population of Madras Presidency	Per cent. decrease or increase	Absolute decrease or i[illegible]crease
1871	397,552	...	...	31,636,276	...	[illegible]
1881	405,848	2·1	8,296	31,181,940	− 1·6	− [illegible]54,336
1891	452,518	11·5	46,670	36,064,408	+ 15·7	− [illegible]2,468
1901	509,346	12·6	56,828	38,653,558	+ 7·2	+ 2,589,[illegible]150
1911	518,660	1·8	9,314	41,870,160	+ 8·3	+ 3,216,602
1921	526,911	1·6	8,251	42,794,155	+ 2·2	+ 923,995
1931	647,230	22·8	120,319	47,193,602	+ 10·2	+ 4,399,447

City: Per cent. of variation 1871–1931 = 62·8.

Population of India

Date	Population of India	Per cent. increase or decrease	Total increase or decrease
1881	253,896,330	(Since 1872) + 23·2	+ 47,733,970[1]
1891	287,314,671	+ 13·2	+ 33,418,341
1901	294,361,056	+ 2·5	+ 7,046,395
1911	315,156,396	+ 7·1	+ 20,795,340
1921	318,942,480	+ 1·2	+ 3,786,084
1931	352,837,778	+ 10·6	+ 33,895,298

[1] The inclusion of new areas added 33,139,081 to the population during the period 1872–81. The actual increase added only 14,594,889. Similar additions were made in the later Censuses also, as follows :—

	Population added by enumeration of new areas
1891	5,713,902
1901	2,672,077
1911	1,793,365
1921	86,633

decades (1891-1930)[1] indicates a large excess of deaths over births for the first three decades and a very small excess of births over deaths for the last decade.

CITY OF MADRAS

Decade	Births			Deaths			Births minus deaths
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	
1891-1900	178,349	91,385	86,964	183,432	90,298	93,134	− 5,083
1901-1910	191,903	98,573	93,330	219,610	110,213	109,397	−27,707
1911-1920	196,344	100,417	95,927	219,307	109,381	109,926	−22,963
1921-1930	225,035	115,375	109,660	224,441	114,625	109,816	+ 594

It is generally assumed that deaths are more fully recorded in India than births. Hence as the registration figures improved the gap between births and deaths in the city was likely to narrow, and except for the decade 1891-1901, when there were probably serious omissions at both ends, this has in fact happened. Between 1921 and 1930 the gap between births and deaths was eliminated and more recent vital statistics indicate that between 1930 and 1934 there has been a natural increase in the population each year. The figures[2] are as follows:

Year	Births	Deaths	Natural increase
1930	25,662	22,839	2823
1931	25,738	23,162	2576
1932	27,996	22,290	5706
1933	28,533	24,500	4033
1934	28,149	23,659	4490

[1] Earlier registration figures have been omitted. Of these 1891-1930 figures Mr. Yeatts, the author of the 1931 Census Report for Madras, remarks: 'The figures are subject to a good deal of qualification for registration of vital statistics is by no means perfect even now and was notably less so forty years ago. The recording of these statistics has been in fact constantly developing and this introduces an unknown element of variation into the results.'

[2] Annual Report of the Health Department, Corporation of Madras, 1934, p. 2.

This reversal of the situation in regard to births and deaths is not, fortunately, entirely due to improved registration. Improved sanitation and improved public health services, with an increasing utilization by the public of the latter, have played a large part in reducing the death-rate in the city, which has dropped considerably since 1928 (see graph on page 43).

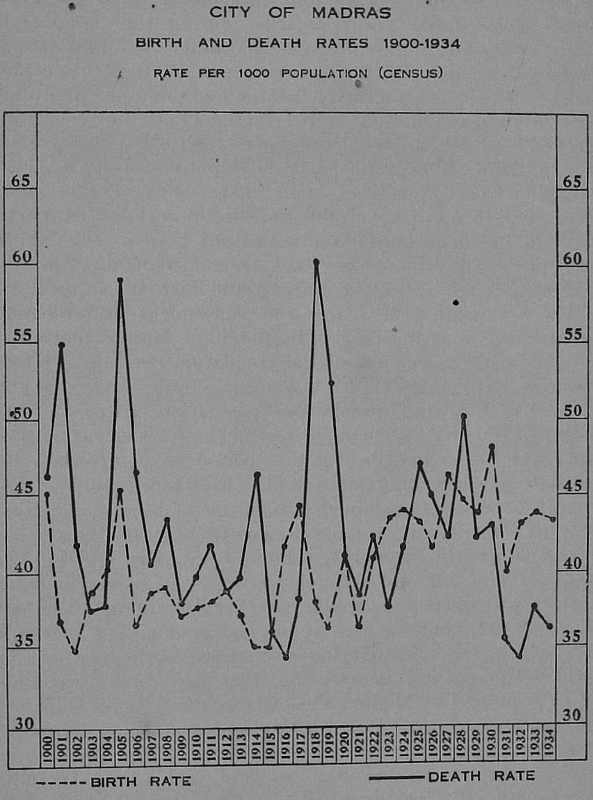
Reliable statistics of immigration and emigration are not available, so that it is not possible to make a comparison from decade to decade between the vital statistics given above and immigration figures, in relation to the absolute decennial increases of population. The census returns do, however, contain some information as to birth-place. In 1931, 'as a measure of retrenchment' a complete tabulation of birth-place statistics was not made, so that the attempt at a complete decennial comparison is baulked. The 1931 Report states that 'figures do exist to show that 422,000 out of Madras' 647,000 odd were born within the city, i.e. approximately two-thirds; 203,000 or rather less than a third were born elsewhere in the presidency, 13,000 in contiguous provinces or States, 6,000 elsewhere in India and 4,000 beyond India. Of this last figure the majority represents Europeans; and considerable contingents come from Ceylon, the Straits Settlements, Cape Colony and Natal. Madras-born people will be found in most parts of Asia and Australasia. Of every 1,000 persons in the city 652 were born in the city, 313 elsewhere within the presidency, 29 elsewhere in India and 6 beyond India.'[1]

There was no exact tabulation of the data upon which this 'round figure' estimate was based, but it provides a rough confirmation of the fact, already indicated by the vital statistics, that 'Madras is a city that grows by outside accretion'.[2]

Since the growth of Madras city has been artificial, it is desirable to examine very briefly the natural movement of population in the presidency of Madras before any closer analysis of the city population is attempted.

The table on page 40 shows that between 1871 and 1881 the population of the presidency decreased by 1·6 per cent. This decrease is accounted for by the fact that between 1876-8 famine conditions of quite exceptional severity existed

[1] *Census Tables for the City of Madras*, 1931, p. 6.
[2] ibid., p. 3.


CITY OF MADRAS
BIRTH AND DEATH RATES 1900-1934
RATE PER 1000 POPULATION (CENSUS)
65
60
55
50
45
40
35
30
1900
1901
1902
1903
1904
1905
1906
1907
1908
1909
1910
1911
1912
1913
1914
1915
1916
1917
1918
1919
1920
1921
1922
1923
1924
1925
1926
1927
1928
1929
1930
1931
1932
1933
1934
----- BIRTH RATE
DEATH RATE

in several districts of the presidency.[1] The districts directly affected by the famine were Nellore, Cudappah, Kurnool, Bellary, North Arcot, Madura, Salem and Coimbatore. There are twenty-one districts in the presidency and though only eight of these were classified as 'famine areas', the effects of the famine were felt throughout the whole presidency. The decline in population during the decade was not the result only of high mortality in the famine districts. Though in the greater part of the Presidency, which escaped the direct visitation of famine, mortality rates were not abnormal, rapid reproduction was effectively checked.

'In 1876-8 very much fewer children were begotten throughout the Presidency than in previous or subsequent years, and this is true of the so-called non-famine districts, although to an obviously slighter extent than of the famine districts.'[2] This more or less general reduction in the birthrate was the result of scarcity and high prices resulting in lower standards of living and consequent enfeeblement and debility, and together with the high famine mortality, brought about a decrease in the population over the 1871-81 decade.

In the following decade the population increased with abnormal rapidity. There seems to have been a marked increase in fecundity during this period to compensate for the barren years of famine. The heightened rate of reproduction was not sustained into the next decade, and from 1891-1911 there was a more moderate but steady increase in population, the percentage rate of increase for the two decades being 7·2 and 8·3 respectively. It seems probable that this rate of increase would have been maintained between 1911 and 1921, but for the 'influenza' epidemic of 1918 and 1919 which India shared in common with the rest of the world. The natural increase for that decennium was only 2·2 per cent. The Madras Presidency figures again leapt up, however, between 1921 and 1931, and this marked upward thrust was general all over India. The Madras Presidency witnessed an increase of 10·2 per cent., while the All-India increase was 10·6 per cent.

[1] W. R. Cornish, *Review of the Madras Famine*, 1876-8 (Madras).
[2] Imperial Census of 1881. The Presidency of Madras, vol. I, p. 26.

This book is not directly concerned with the general question of population in India. This brief account of the movement of population in Madras Presidency is sufficient to indicate that marked tendency towards a substantial natural increase which is giving serious concern to all students of Indian life and evoking a remarkable amount of study and research on population questions and not a little controversy. This is the background against which the movement of population in Madras city must be examined. It has already been shown that apart from a steady flow of immigration into the city its population would have declined considerably during the period under review. There is thus no very direct relation between the forces governing the movement of population in the presidency and those governing the growth of the city.

Distribution and Movement within the City

The attempt to make a comparative examination of the distribution of the population throughout the municipal area of Madras city is complicated by the fact that the constitutional evolution of the city has involved changes from time to time in the number and the area of the municipal divisions. The total area of the city has been enlarged but slightly since 1871, but with the growth of the population and the development of administrative machinery together with the steady advance of democratic control frequent rearrangement and sub-division of administrative areas has been necessary. Fortunately, for the purposes of measuring the relative distribution of the population these changes have been made within the framework of the earlier and larger administrative units, so that comparison over the period under investigation is possible on a reasonably accurate basis. In 1871 there were eight municipal divisions; in 1911 there were twenty; in 1931 there were thirty; and a recent amendment of the Madras City Municipal Act has added still further to the number of divisions. This latest development will not concern us here as it took place after the census of 1931.

Area in 1871

The eight municipal divisions of 1871 covered an area of approximately 27 square miles.

The area,[1] population and density of each division at the 1871 census was as follows :

Division	Area in sq. miles	Population	Density per sq. mile
I.	5·31	64,885	12,219
II.	0·74	73,062	98,732
III.	0·66	52,097	78,934
IV.	3·88	9,701	2,500
V.	2·44	64,901	26,598
VI.	4·16	19,221	4,620
VII.	1·32	68,940	52,227
VIII.	4·40	41,113	9,344

The homeless poor were estimated at 3,632.

This table indicates the unevenness with which the population is distributed throughout the city. In 1871 Madras was what Professor Patrick Geddes might have called a 'connurbation',[2] being made up of several distinct towns, each densely populated, and a loose agglomeration of villages.[3] This description might be applied with fair accuracy even today, though the improvement of roads and streets and the general development of communications have welded the city into a more unified whole and blurred to some extent the formerly fairly clear division between village and village.

[1] Cultivated lands, tanks, parks, etc., and Fort St. George are omitted from the estimates of the various divisional areas. The total area of such excluded parts was given as 3·91 sq. miles. On page 98 of the Census Report (1871) the area of the third Division is given as 0·91 sq. miles. In this calculation the Fort St. George area seems to have been included. The density calculation given above is, however, based on the 0·66 estimate which excludes the Fort.

[2] 'Professor Geddes has coined this somewhat ugly but expressive word to indicate a constellation of urban communities.' P. Abercrombie, *Regional Survey of Bristol and Bath*, p. 28.

[3] *Census of the Town of Madras*, 1871, p. 64. 'The township is made up of 36 distinct villages.'

The main concentration of population was in divisions II, III, V and VII. The second and third divisions constituted the old 'Blacktown' (now Georgetown). Division VII was another distinct urban unit including Triplicane and Chintadripet, while the Vth division formed a wedge between the IInd and the VIIth, and was a distinct though more sparsely populated, unit. These four districts formed a populous belt encircling Fort St. George. The remaining divisions (I, IV, VI and VIII) represent the outer belt of the city; and were larger in area than those of the inner semi-circle—each of them included large tracts of open or cultivated land—and their population was very unevenly distributed, the main concentrations being represented by various scattered villages.

In 1871 Madras had plenty of room for expansion within the limits of the municipal boundaries, and large areas of what was technically the 'town of Madras' must have presented an entirely rural appearance. In the possession of these extensive and largely undeveloped tracts Madras has enjoyed a great advantage over other Indian cities such as Calcutta or Bombay (especially Bombay)[1] where the obstacles to lateral extension have forced a vertical rather than a horizontal development. Until comparatively recently, Madras could be accurately described as a one-storied city, and if its immense distances created transport problems, they at least delivered the city from 'sky-scaling' tendencies and the huddled dreariness of the Bombay 'chawl'.[2]

The city almost doubled its population over a period of 60 years (1871-1931) without substantially extending its boundaries. The table on page 48 sets out

[1] 'Though the population of the city is only two-thirds of that of Bombay, and only three-fifths of that of Calcutta, it has spread itself over an area 5 sq. miles larger than that occupied by the former and only 3 sq. miles less than that covered by the latter. Though large parts are strictly urban in their characteristics, the city as a whole, is in fact, rather a fortuitous collection of villages separated from the surrounding country by an arbitrary boundary line, than a town in the usual sense of the word. . . . Some of these villages are rural hamlets to this day, showing no sign of urban influence beyond the municipal lamp-posts and dust-bins with which their streets are dotted.' *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (Provincial Series), 1908, Madras, vol. I, p. 498.

[2] Tenement building.

the comparative divisional distribution of population over this period.

Division[1]	1871	1901	1911	1921	1931
I.	64,885	84,156	76,073	78,141	99,064
II.	73,062	89 375	109,060	103,149	114,782
III.	52,097	61,963	33,743	35,958	35,663
IV.	9,701	23,223	24,979	28,766	43,817
V.	64,901	86,020	95,016	99,559	106,064
VI.	19,221	23,843	26,931	30,555	51,572
VII.	68,940	93,854	98,246	92,645	114,437
VIII.	41,113	46,912	54,612	58,140	81,816
	3,632				
Total ...	397,552	509,346	518,660	526,911	647,230

The distribution characteristic of the city in 1871 has been maintained throughout the period—the main concentration of population in 1931 being still around the Fort. For the first half of this sixty-year period there was a fairly even growth in population over the whole city—each division registering an increase. Some districts (notably Perambur)[2] showed signs of more rapid growth than others, but, on the whole, the accessions were smoothly distributed. In the second half of the period (1871-1931), however, the internal distribution of the city's population showed signs of less regular movement, the third division losing a very large percentage of its population while the other divisions grew with varying degrees of rapidity.

Between 1901 and 1921 the gross increase in the population of the city was relatively small. In 1921 there were only

[1] Calculations have been made for the whole period on the basis of the eight divisions of 1871. This has been possible because subsequent additions to the number of municipal divisions have been made by the sub-division of the earlier administrative areas.

[2] The erection of the Buckingham & Carnatic Mills in the Perambur area at the end of the nineteenth century is sufficient to account for the striking increase recorded in this division before 1901.

some 17,000 more people living in Madras than in 1901, and this limited increase in the total population adds significance to the internal changes. The most striking shiftages of population took place in the north of the city between 1901 and 1911. During this decade there was a decrease in density in the first division of over 1,000 per square mile. In the third division there was a decrease of over 17,000 per square mile.[1] In the 1911 census report for the city, Mr. J. C. Molony remarks that 'the obvious reason why people avoid the extreme north-east of the city is that communications are bad—there are no tramways. If the bread-winner's work is far away he has no cheap and easy means of getting to it.'[2] This remark applies only to the first division; and it is clear that, though lack of communications might have retarded the increase of the population in the division, this reason, does not, by itself, account for such a substantial *decrease* as that recorded between 1901 and 1911.

Two reasons for the decrease may be suggested. One is that the south-eastern section of the division is just to the north of the harbour. The erection of the harbour has had the curious effect of creating a steadily increasing sand accretion to the south and a process of erosion on the coast line immediately to the north. This tendency for the sea to eat into the land has not, as yet, been very serious in its results. But it is probable that when the encroachment first began it created considerable excitement among the fisher folk who lived by the sea-shore. When the land began to crumble and fall into the sea there may have been slight panic. 'Some houses may have been lost and nobody is likely to build on the ground overhanging the water's edge.'[3] Those who desired a more 'abiding city' probably moved inland or farther south; and with the aforementioned lack of communications in north Madras, it is likely that those who moved at all moved out of the first division.

The other possible reason for the decrease in the population of north-east Madras during the first decade of this century was the suspicion that malaria was 'creeping in from Ennur'.[4] Ennur (or Ennore) lies on the coast about eight miles to the north of the city. The visitor today may see there a number of large derelict bungalows on the edge of a

[1] See *The City of Madras*, 1911, Appendix, Table II, p. iii.
[2] ibid., p. 4.
[3] *The City of Madras*, 1911, p. 4.
[4] ibid., p. 4.

most attractive-looking lagoon. Fifty years ago—before easy methods of travel made the Nilgiri and the Palni Hills so accessible as they are today—Ennore was a popular resort of the European official or business man, and a very pleasant refuge from the dust and stuffiness of the city. It was later discovered that the shores of the lagoon were malarial, and the popularity of Ennore at once waned. The bungalows were left empty and allowed to fall into disrepair and the victorious mosquito was left in possession.[1].

The ordinary citizen of Madras could not be described as a stickler in matters of public health. For the most part he is quite content with the assumption that death-rates rise or fall by the unaccountable whims of heaven. But he dislikes fever—as any sensible man would—for though it seldom kills him outright it is both unpleasant and inconvenient. The salubrity of any particular place is judged by the simple test of whether it is 'feverish' or 'not-feverish'. The mere suspicion, hinted at in the 1911 census report, that malaria may have been finding its way into the north of the city from Ennore would by itself have been sufficient to bring about a decrease in the population.[2]

The still more decided slump in the population of the third division during the same period (1901-11) may be accounted for by less tentative reasons. Division III lies immediately behind the harbour, and the sea front in this division had by 1911 (except for European 'chummeries'[3]) practically ceased to be residential and was 'covered with large blocks of business premises'.[4] With the development of the harbour and the steady growth of commerce the encroachment of warehouses and offices into residential territory continued to push the population out of Division III. Though this process seems to have been temporarily arrested between 1911 and 1921, it began again in the following decade, and it is noteworthy that during the latter decade (1921-31) while every other division showed such a substantial increase, this section recorded a decline.

[1] It is now widely believed in Madras that Ennore has ceased to be malarial. European residents are beginning to drift back and in 1934 there were a few families living there.

[2] See *Census Report: City of Madras*, 1921, p. 4. 'The increase in divisions 1 to 3 indicates that those parts of the city have now recovered from the effects of malaria which greatly affected that area during the previous decade.'

[3] Flats occupied by groups of unmarried men.

[4] *The City of Madras*, 1911, p. 4.

The figures in the table (p. 48) indicate that the flow of population from Division III, between 1901 and 1911, was mainly directed into Division II, which lies immediately to the west, and showed an exceptionally large increase during this decade.

DENSITY BY DIVISIONS IN 1931

This very general account of the distribution and internal movement of the population of the city during the period under survey, may appropriately be concluded with a more detailed estimate of the density of the population in 1931.

The area of the city in 1931 was 29·396 sq. miles,[1] or 19,728 acres.[2] There were thirty administrative divisions, of which the area and density per acre was as follows:

Div. No.	Area (acres)	Density	Div. No.	Area	Density	Div. No.	Area	Density
1	557	39	11	58	124	21	1099	22
2	464	56	12	155	139	22	19 6	14
3	321	80	13	114	166	23	201	134
4	2093	12	14	139	28	24	333	94
5	114	76	15	120	143	25	705	24
6	986	14	16	2528	17	26	168	116
7	112	113	17	230	119	27	169	1'6
8	96	68	18	269	101	28	680	40
9	110	175	19	450	46	29	3115	11
10	123	165	20	698	42	30	1525	14

[1] *Administration Report of the Corporation of Madras*, 1933-4, p. 2. The following areas make up the total:

	Square Miles
Tondiarpet	4·496
Royapuram	0·870
Georgetown	2·085
Triplicane	3·210
Chintadripet	0·314
Mylapore	5·517
Kilpauk	3·931
Perambur	4·310
Nungambakkam	2·863
Mambalam	1·800
Total ...	29·396

The most notable addition to the municipal area since 1871 has been the inclusion of Mambalam, an area on the south-west of the city which has recently been developed as a residential suburb.

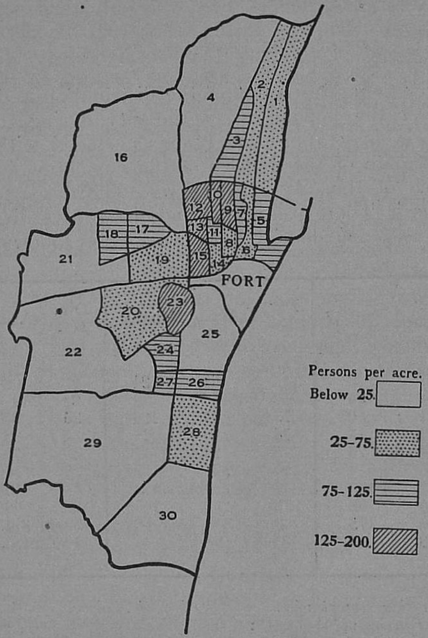
[2] *Census Tables : City of Madras*, 1931, p. 4.

MADRAS CITY

Density of Population

By Divisions

1931



Divisions

1. Royapuram.
2. Tondiarpet.
3. Washermanpet.
4. Korukkupet.
5. Harbour.
6 Muthialpet.
7. Katchaleswaranpet.
8. Kothawal Bazaar.
9. Ammankoil.
10. Seven Wells.
11. Sowcarpet.
12. Peddunaickenpet.
13. Trevelyan Basin.
14. Esplanade.
15. Park Town.
16. Perambur.
17. Choolai.
18. Pursawalkam.
19. Vepery.
20. Egmore.
21. Kilpauk.
22. Nungambakkam.
23. Chintadripet.
24. Tiruvateeswaranpet.
25. Chepauk.
26. Triplicane.
27. Amir Mahal.
28. Mirsahibpet.
29. Royapettah.
30. Mylapore.

This diagram shows the marked variation both in the area of the divisions and in their density. The locality to the north-west of the Fort has remained throughout the history of the city the most populous area. But it is significant, though not surprising, that it was these excessively congested districts which showed the only tendency towards a decrease in density during the 1921-31 decade. The 'density range' of the city 'is considerable'; 'more than half the city's area has less than 25 persons to the acre, a figure that by no means summons up a picture of urban congestion. In no fewer than five wards, not counting the Fort, the density does not reach 15 persons per acre. In only three divisions is 150 per acre exceeded with Ammankoil recording 175 as highest in the city, Trevelyan Basin following with 166. With the exception of Chintadripet all the wards with over 125 to the acre lie in a compact block between the Buckingham Canal on the west, the Cooum on the south, and the Tiruvottiyur Road on the east.'[1] It is to be noted, however, that the population is not spread evenly, throughout those districts which have low figures for total density. In many cases these low figures are accounted for by the location within the division of extensive open spaces, and do not necessarily mean that there is no overcrowding and congestion, in occupied areas within the same division.

GREATER MADRAS

The Census Report of 1931[2] noted an increasing readines 'to settle more freely on the city margins'. This welcome development must be attributed chiefly to the influence of the motor-bus, which has revolutionized communications in the city. Though the efficiency of the bus services leaves much to be desired, they are none the less extensively used. The electrification of a portion of the South Indian Railway is also proving an encouragement to suburban residence and in recent years there have been noticeable housing developments in some of the areas served by the electric railway.

Even before the convenience of an electric train service provided a special incentive, the drift to the margins of the city, and especially the south-west margins, had been noted. The Census Report of 1921 stated that 'in addition to the loss caused by deaths, the city has lost about 10,000 people during the last decade, by persons whose business is in the city transferring their homes from its congested areas to

[1] *Census Tables: City of Madras*, 1931, p. 5. [2] Page 3.

residential quarters outside the municipal limits.'[1] 'In the villages of the Saidapet taluk, just outside Madras, the population has increased by 17½ per cent, though the normal increase for the district is only 6 per cent.'[2]

The 1931 Census gave figures for 'greater Madras' which show clearly the rapid growth of residential colonies on the outskirts of the city—beyond the existing municipal boundaries. 'The effective urban population in the Cooum and Adyar lower valleys is almost a lakh above the numbers confined within the actual city boundaries.'[3]

The following table gives in detail the population of the more important of these 'outer areas' and the total figure for 'greater Madras'.

'Greater Madras'[4]

Growing Districts beyond Municipal boundary	Houses	Males	Females	Persons
North				
Tiruvottiyur town ...	2,272	5,629	5,203	10,732
West				
Group 1—				
Sembiam town ...	5,660	17,252	15,875	33,127
Villivakkam ...	299	866	798	1,664
Group 2—				
Aminjikarai ...	602	1,809	1,698	3,507
Kodambakkam ...	95	275	222	497
South-west				
Saidapet municipality ...	5,038	17,129	15,908	33,037
Guindy Park ...	57	138	95	233
St. Thomas Mount town ...	1,266	5,129	4,164	9,293
Total ...	15,289	48,127	43,963	92,090
Greater Madras total ...	89,134	389,350	349,970	739,320

The boundary of 'greater Madras' is indicated on the outline map on page 55.

[1] *Census Tables: City of Madras*, 1921, p. 3.
[2] ibid., p. 3.
[3] *Census Tables: City of Madras*, 1931, p. 3.
[4] ibid., p. 3.

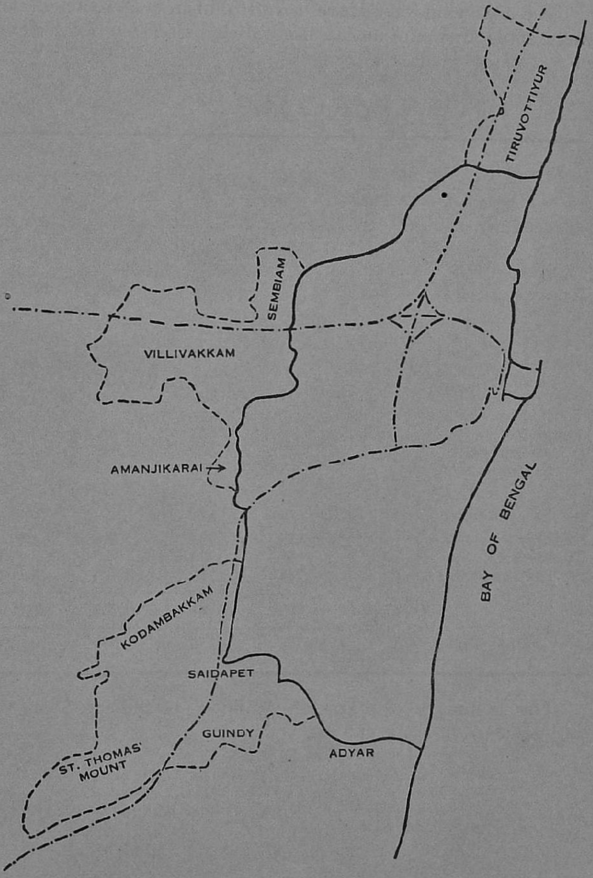
GREATER MADRAS
1931

Municipal boundary..............————————

Greater Madras boundary....— — — — — — — —

Railway lines ....—·—·—·—·—

Scale: 1 mile=3/4 inches



These developing 'outer areas' lie on the main outlets from the city by rail and by road. The railway routes are indicated on the outline map and it is significant that the three railway lines run directly through the new residential areas. The main 'bus routes have not been marked on the map, but each of the three districts is similarly served by passenger 'buses.

It seems clear from this survey that in the future Madras city is going to continue its lateral extension. It is probable that the density of population in the 'inner belt' will continue to decrease, while on those margins of the city which are well served by communications it will increase.

CHAPTER V

WHY THE CITY GROWS

THE growth of the city of Madras has, as we have seen, been the result, not of a natural increase in the population, but of a fluctuating stream of immigration from rural areas. It is important, therefore, that an attempt should be made to discover why the city has grown at all, and to enquire into the conditions that have governed the marked variation in the rate of growth from decade to decade.

Mr. D. R. Gadgil in his book on 'The Industrial Evolution of India'[1] discusses the growth of urban life in India in recent times in relation to the industrial development of the country. In an analysis of the factors determining the growth of towns he gives a place of considerable importance to railway construction.[2] Apart from the general effects of developing communications four 'other factors towards an increase in town population' are specified.[3]

(1) Industrial development.

(2) Famines.

(3) The advent of a landless labouring class.

(4) Movement of wealthy landlords towards the towns.

On examining each of these four influences in detail, Mr. Gadgil finally decides that 'the only important factors that effect a definite and permanent movement from the country to the town are the increase of trade and the growth of industries'.[4] This statement may be accepted as broadly true only if the adjective 'definite' is omitted (unless 'definite' and 'permanent' are regarded by the writer as synonymous). A movement may be 'definite' without having any of the elements of permanence. It is a well-known fact that the amount of industrial migration in India is quite exceptional. There is no doubt about its 'definiteness'. But it is equally well known that the Indian industrial migrant does not, in most cases, regard his exodus from the village to the industrial town as permanent and frequently leaves the town to return to his native village.

[1] Oxford University Press, 1929.

[2] Gadgil, p. 157. It is admitted, however, that railway transport is a factor which may work both ways, i.e. it may lead to the decay of old towns as well as to the creation of new ones.

[3] Gadgil, p. 158.

[4] ibid., p. 159.

Weber's generalization that 'economic forces are the principal cause of concentration of population in cities'[1] is as applicable to India today as it was to Europe in the nineteenth century. But it is an over-simplification of the situation to say that cities grow merely because trade is good or industry booming.[2] It is necessary to distinguish clearly between the 'emigration of hope' and the 'emigration of despair'. Men may be *attracted* to the city by the hope of higher wages or more prosperous conditions of living. But they may also be *driven* citywards in despair bred by prolonged periods of agricultural depression.

Madras city is not highly industrialized, and does not therefore provide conditions parallel to those which obtain in Bombay, Calcutta and other large industrial centres in India. The demand for 'industrial' labour, in the narrow sense of the term, is not great, and the proportion of immigrant labour which finds employment in the cotton mills or other large organized industries is small. The fluctuations in the movement towards the city cannot be accounted for entirely by the rise and fall of industrial demand.

Prices and the Movement of Population in Madras

On the assumption that 'economic forces' are closely connected with the 'drift towards the city', and that the movement of prices is the one economic factor which is more nearly universal in its effects than any other, an examination of price movements in relation to the growth of Madras city is of peculiar interest. It should be emphasized that this investigation is limited to Madras, and the inferences drawn from it must not be taken as applying to other Indian cities. Further study would be necessary before any conclusions could be reached on the general forces making for urbanization in India as a whole.

For the purposes of this comparison between the general movement of prices and the rate of the growth of the city of Madras, three different but complementary lines of enquiry have been adopted:

(1) Official index numbers are issued by the department of statistics of the Government of India and published

[1] A. F. Weber, *The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century* (P. S. King), 1899, pp. 157-8.

[2] Gadgil has clearly been influenced by Weber's thesis, which was based entirely on an examination of American and European statistics, and is only occasionally relevant to Indian conditions.

annually in the Statistical Abstract for British India. ' numbers are unweighted and are based upon the whol prices of 28 exported and 11 imported articles. The Genera Index Number is thus based upon the prices of 39 articles and indicates the general movement of prices in British India.

A tabular statement[1] of the course of prices during the period under enquiry as expressed in these official index numbers is as follows :

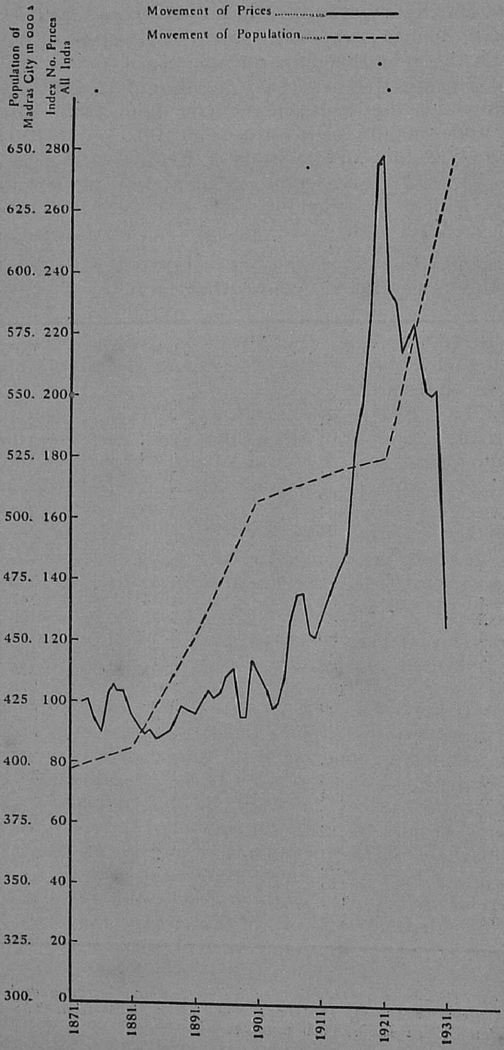
General Index Numbers (all articles—39) of Prices in India, 1873-1931

Prices in 1873 = 100

Date	Index No.	Date	Index No.
1873	100	1903	99
1874	101	1904	101
1875	94	1905	110
1876	90	1906	129
1877	104	1907	137
1878	106	1908	138
1879	104	1909	124
1880	104	1910	122
1881	96	1911	129
1882	92	1912	137
1883	89	1913	143
1884	91	1914	147
1885	87	1915	152
1886	89	1916	184
1887	91	1917	196
1888	96	1918	225
1889	101	1919	276
1890	100	1920	281
1891	98	1921	236
1892	102	1922	232
1893	105	1923	215
1894	102	1924	221
1895	104	1925	227
1896	110	1926	214
1897	113	1927	202
1898	96	1928	201
1899	96	1929	203
1900	116	1930	171
1901	110	1931	127
1902	106		

[1] Up to 1922—from Chablani, *Studies in Indian Currency and Exchange* (Oxford University Press), 1931, pp. 53-4; after 1922—from *The Statistical Abstract for British India*, 66th number.

Iovement of Indian Prices (Official Index Nos.) compared with movement of population .n Madras City, 1881–1931



This table of price movements in British India shows that:

(*a*) During the two decades 1881-91 and 1891-1901, the price level, though subject to annual fluctuations, tended, on the whole, to remain comparatively low.

(*b*) During the next two decades (1901-21) following a sharp drop at the beginning (1902 and 1903) prices rose rapidly, and (except for a setback in 1909 and 1910) continuously, to culminate in the peak of 1920.

(*c*) In 1920 there commenced a drop as sensational as the rise which preceded it and the decade 1921-31 was characterized throughout by sharply falling prices.

The population figures, when compared with the rise and fall of the price indices, show that:

(*a*) In the first period (1881-1901), when price levels tended to remain low, there was a marked increase in the population of Madras city, i.e. a drift of immigrants to the city from the country.

(*b*) In the second period (1901-21), when prices were rising most of the time and in the immediate post-war years soared sensationally, the growth of the city was negligible—the volume of immigration was strikingly diminished.

(*c*) In the final period (1921-31), when prices dropped rapidly to their pre-war level, the population figures soared and the city recorded the greatest decennial increase in the history of the Madras census.

This relation between price and population movements is clearly indicated in the opposite graph.

(2) It is recognized that the economic conditions prevailing in important seaports in India differ considerably from average economic conditions in inland towns and in rural areas. Price quotations at such ports are influenced by world movements of prices as well as by internal tendencies. Madras is a port of some importance and is influenced by world markets. The movement of world prices has, therefore, a direct bearing upon this enquiry, and an examination of the relation between world markets and population movements in Madras city is of interest. For this purpose Sauerbeck's index numbers have been used.[1] These are

[1] *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, vol. xlix, 1886, p. 648; vol. lxxi, 1908, p. 133; vol. lxxxvi, 1923, pp. 206 and 218; vol. xc, 1927, pp. 329

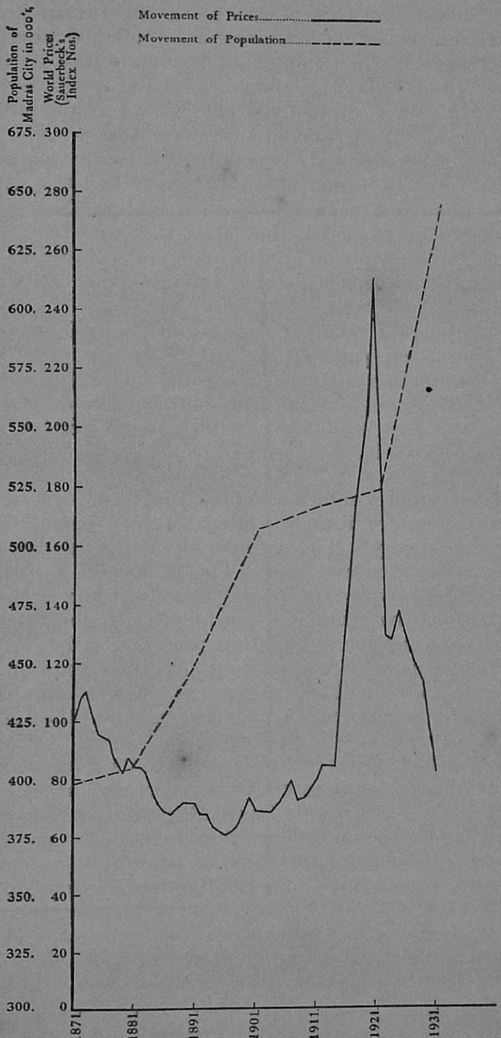
based upon current prices of selected groups of commodities and precious metals, and the numbers used for the purposes of this enquiry represent a summary of the detailed index numbers for separate commodities or groups of commodities. The average prices of the years 1866-77 are taken to represent 100.

The following summary of Sauerbeck's index numbers shows the movement of world prices over the period under investigation :

Date	Index No.	Date	Index No.
1871	100	1902	69
1872	109	1903	69
1873	111	1904	70
1874	102	1905	72
1875	96	1906	77
1876	95	1907	80
1877	94	1908	73
1878	87	1909	74
1879	83	1910	78
1880	88	1911	80
1881	85	1912	85
1882	84	1913	85
1883	82	1914	85
1884	76	1915	108
1885	72	1916	136
1886	69	1917	175
1887	68	1918	192
1888	70	1919	206
1889	72	1920	251
1890	72	1921	155
1891	72	1922	131
1892	68	1923	129
1893	68	1924	139
1894	63	1925	136
1895	62	1926	126
1896	61	1927	122
1897	62	1928	120
1898	64	1929	115
1899	68	1930	97
1900	75	1931	83
1901	70		

and 338; vol. xcvii, 1934, p. 315. After Sauerbeck's death, the Editor of 'The Statist' continued the annual publication of Index Numbers based on Sauerbeck's method of calculation.

Movement of World Prices (Sauerbeck's Index Nos.) compared with movement of population in Madras City



In comparison with the index numbers of Indian prices there are three main points which distinguish the movement of world prices. (*a*) One is that while the Indian price level fluctuated sometimes with considerable violence from year to year in the pre-war period, the movement of world prices was much more smooth, and the general price level more stable. (*b*) It is also notable that, while in the immediate pre-war period (1903-14) Indian prices rose with a marked persistence, the comparative stability of world markets was maintained up to the end of 1914. (*c*) When the world-war came, world prices reacted more swiftly than Indian prices, which was to be expected; and after the war, between 1920 and 1922 the descent of the world price level was much more sudden and marked than was the case with Indian prices.

This is apparent when the graph on page 63 is compared with the graph on page 60.

This examination of world price movements in relation to the growth of Madras city provides further evidence that low or falling prices stimulate, while rising prices retard, emigration to the city from rural areas.

(3) A further confirmation of this view is found in a strictly local enquiry into the prices of food grains over the period under survey. The two staple items of diet in the Madras area are rice and ragi. The latter is a millet which is consumed mainly by the poorer classes of the community, though its nutritive value is considerably higher than that of rice. Any movement in the price of either of these commodities affects large sections of the community. A simultaneous movement in the prices of both would affect everybody, for everybody consumes one or the other or both.

The statistical abstract for British India contains figures for the average annual retail prices current in food grains from 1897 to 1931, in Madras. Rice and ragi are given separately and, though their movements do not always synchronize, the general tendency of prices for both commodities at any given time is normally in the same direction. For the sake of conciseness, the two have been combined and the average annual price in rupees per maund[1]

[1] 1 maund = 82·286 lb. (or 100 lb. Troy weight).

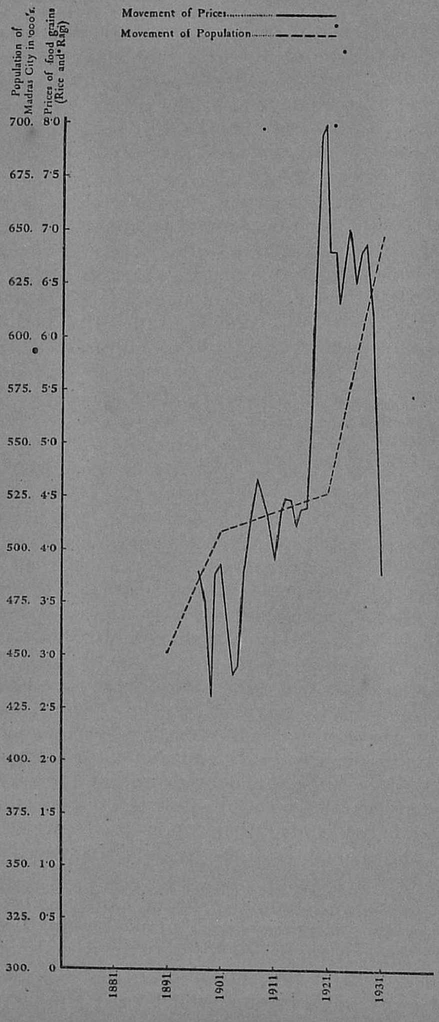
for rice and ragi has been calculated, with the following results :

Date	Average annual retail prices current in food grains (rice and ragi) in Madras, given in rupees per maund
1897	3·8
1898	3·5
1899	2·6
1900	3·8
1901	3·9
1902	3·3
1903	2·8
1904	2·9
1905	3·7
1906	4·2
1907	4·4
1908	4·7
1909	4·5
1910	4·3
1911	3·9
1912	4·4
1913	4·5
1914	4·5
1915	4·2
1916	4·4
1917	4·4
1918	5·2
1919	7·9
1920	8·0
1921	6·8
1922	6·8
1923	6·3
1924	6·7
1925	7·0
1926	6·5
1927	6·8
1928	6·9
1929	6·5
1930	5·6
1931	3·8

On the basis of these figures it is only possible to make a valid comparison with the movement of population from 1901 to 1931. But again it is clear that the city grew least when the prices of food grains showed a persistent tendency to rise, and *per contra* that when prices were falling persistently the population of the city increased with great rapidity.

There is thus a cumulative weight of evidence in support of the view that migration to Madras city has been governed by the movement of prices. Alternate periods of stagnation and rapid growth in the population of the city have not been due to obscure and arbitrary influences. The city has tended

Average Annual Retail Prices current in food grains (Rice and Ragi) in Madras in Rupee per maund (1 maund = 82·286 lbs. or 100 lbs. Troy) compared with movement of population in Madras City, 1891–1931



to grow rapidly or slowly according to whether prices have tended to rise or fall.

Prices and Prosperity

With the general theory of prices this thesis is not directly concerned, but there is one aspect of price theory in India which has direct relevance to the question under discussion in this chapter, i.e. the effect of rising prices on the general prosperity of the country.

It has already been noted that for twenty years before the war Indian prices showed a persistent tendency to rise. Though this phenomenon was not confined to India, it manifested itself with peculiar emphasis there. The Government of India initiated an enquiry into this rise of prices in the pre-war period, which enquiry was carried out by Mr. K. L. Datta of the Finance Department of the Government of India. His report was published in 1914,[1] and in it the theory is advanced that in an agricultural country such as India 'a rise of prices cannot but lead to general prosperity of the country as a whole'.[2] This view has never commanded general acceptance in India, where the popular belief 'is that the rise of prices is detrimental to the interests of the country as a whole'. Mr. Datta accounts for the wide currency of this opinion by the fact that public opinion in India is formed by the educated classes 'who are either landlords or persons depending for their income on securities, shares, etc., or are members of the learned professions dependent for their income on customary fees or are employees on fixed salaries in Government or private service'.[3] The opponents of Datta's theory that agriculturists gain by a rise of prices argue that while large farmers may benefit, the smaller farmers do not, since they have not enough land to have any quantity of produce for sale, and thus cannot take advantage of the high prices, while they have to pay more for such limited commodities as they purchase.[4]

[1] *Report on the Enquiry into the Rise of Prices in India*, by K. L. Datta (Calcutta), 1914, 5 volumes.

[2] Datta, vol. I, p. 136, para. 329.

[3] Datta, vol. I, p. 139, para. 337.

[4] Cf. B. Narain, *Essays on Indian Economic Problems* (Lahore), 1922, p. 91. Narain writes (pp. 50-1): 'It may be well to remind all those who build nice theories of the prosperity of India's small farmers on very slender evidence, of the views of Hassu, a small farmer, who when questioned on the subject, said: "The rise of prices would mean something to me if I had anything to sell. What I produce is barely sufficient for my own consumption. The rise of prices means nothing to me."'

There seems to be considerable force in this argument, but it is, after all, theoretical, and evidence has been collected which indicates that over the period 1895-1912 when prices were rising, the wages, both nominal and real, of agricultural labourers and village artisans rose steadily, and, furthermore, that the proportionate increases in wages were greater in rural than in urban areas and greater amongst general labourers than amongst those employed in the more highly organized industries. This is shown in the following table.[1]

COMPARATIVE STATEMENT SHOWING NOMINAL AND REAL WAGES IN RURAL, URBAN AND CITY AREAS, 1895-1912

All-India

Areas	Nominal Wages					Real Wages				
	1895	1900	1905	1910	1912	1895–99	1900–04	1905–09	1910	1912
Rural[2] ...	106	126	148	171	190	104	121	123	135	138
Urban[3] ...	106	123	142	165	181	103	118	119	131	133
Cities[4] ...	104	122	139	163	174	105	117	118	129	128
Industries[5] ...	104	113	123	139	143	99	106	100	110	106

A comparison between wages in Madras city and wages in other parts of the presidency gives the following result (Datta's Index Numbers):

Area	Nominal Wages					Real Wages				
	1895	1900	1905	1910	1912	1895–99	1900–04	1905–09	1910	1912
Madras City ...	106	117	128	149	151	109	113	110	109	109
Madras Presidency (average) ...	107	124	144	161	177	106	121	123	124	129

[1] Datta, *Report on the Enquiry into the Rise in Prices*, vol. I, pp. 169-70.
[2] Agricultural labourers and village artisans.
[3] Skilled and unskilled labourers and domestic servants in towns with population of less than 100,000.
[4] Skilled and unskilled labourers and domestic servants in towns with population over 100,000.
[5] Jute, cotton, wool, leather, brewing, tea, sugar, paper, lock workshops, printing, mining, railways, canals.

If these index numbers are reliable, they point inevitably to the conclusion that, whatever the effect of rising prices may be upon the prosperity of the small farmer, in this particular period of rising price levels (1895-1912) the agricultural labourer benefited both by an absolute increase in real wages and a relatively greater increase than either the urban labourer or the industrial employee.

These figures, together with the evidence that rising prices retard effectively immigration into the city of Madras from rural areas, while falling prices stimulate it, reinforce strongly the conclusion of Datta that agricultural India is benefited by a rising price level. Mrs. Anstey discusses this controversial question in *The Economic Development of India*,[1] and arrives at the same conclusion.

'In India', she writes, 'the bulk of the people belong to those classes which are benefited by a rise in prices. The number of persons with fixed incomes is exceptionally small, and the bulk of the creditors are money-lenders, who—although they perform certain useful functions—on the whole, act as "blood-suckers", and obtain incomes out of all proportion to their services to society. The number of debtors is exceptionally great—especially amongst the cultivators—and the burden of debt undoubtedly militates against the introduction of better agricultural methods. The mass of the population still consists of peasant cultivators, who, in the main, produce subsistence crops and sell their surplus. If the rise in prices is equally spread, they gain on their sales as much as they lose on their purchases, whilst a large proportion of them gain as debtors. They also gain as regards land revenue, as the rate of assessment is altered only at long intervals. Even then the increase in assessment is strictly limited, and does not absorb the whole of any gain that may have accrued to the cultivators. Cash rents also "lag" in relation to prices. Finally as one of the crying needs of India is for more capital and for the investment of existing capital in productive enterprises, the stimulation to such enterprises of rising prices should be welcomed.' She concludes her argument with the statement that 'other things being equal, a gradual rise in prices in India is beneficial'.

In a later passage in the same book she seems to qualify this general conclusion by distinguishing between the effect on general prosperity of the pre-war rise in prices and the war-time and post-war boom.

It can be said that, on the whole, the increase in the general level of prices, and the relatively greater increase in

[1] 1931, p. 446.

internal prices, between 1900 and 1914 reacted favourably on general prosperity and on the condition of the labouring classes in particular, whereas after 1914—although other factors were at work economically favourable to India—the rise in prices, accompanied by the relative increase in the price of imports, tended to be unfavourable.[1]

This argument relates only to that movement of prices which is due to monetary causes and the fluctuations of world trade.

In considering price levels, in so far as they affect migration to Madras city, it is necessary that a clear distinction should be made between the different causes underlying price movements. High prices in India may be due to: (1) scarcity of food; (2) monetary inflation—an increase in the money offered for goods; or (3) to both causes operating simultaneously.

In his survey of the causes of the rise in prices in India in the pre-war period, Datta mentions several factors[2] which he describes as 'peculiar to India'. First among these he places a shortage of agricultural products and raw materials, which he suggested was due to:

(1) The growth of cultivation not keeping pace with the population.

(2) Unseasonable rainfall.

(3) The substitution of non-food for food crops.

(4) The inferiority of new lands taken up for cultivation.

(5) Insufficient tillage on account of dearness or scarcity of plough cattle and labour.

(6) Decreased productive power of the soil.

The Government of India did not accept this general analysis and emphasized the effects of world causes as opposed to internal agricultural causes as the main reason for the rise in prices. And Mr. Chablani[3] has pointed out that 'it is difficult to reconcile the proposition that the production of food supply had not kept pace with the growth of population with the emphasis (which is very marked in the Datta report) on rising standards of living even in matters of *food*.' 'Increased consumption', he argues, 'is impossible without increased production'.

[1] Vera Anstey, *The Economic Development of India* (1931), pp. 460-1.
[2] *Enquiry into the Rise of Prices in India,* 1914, vol. I.
[3] *Studies in Indian Currency and Exchange* (Oxford University Press), 1931, p. 60.

Famine and Migration

It is, however, an undoubted fact that 'unseasonable rainfall' with resultant famine has from time to time forced up agricultural prices. In Madras Presidency during the famine of 1876-8 and the monsoon failures of 1918 and 1920, prices of foodstuffs reacted sharply to the conditions of scarcity. But it is remarkable that such periods of famine or scarcity do not seem to have produced any appreciable increase in the amount of immigration to the city.

One explanation of this fact which may be advanced is that the scarcity affected the urban as severely as the rural areas, that the city offered no advantages as compared with the country and, other things being equal, the South Indian probably prefers life in his village to life in the city. If, as in the case of famine, the chances of his dying are considerable, he would certainly prefer to die in familiar surroundings and amongst friends.

A more important deterrent to migration citywards in time of famine is, however, found in the arrangements for relief provided for in the Famine Code. In a published review of the Madras Famine of 1876-8[1] an account is given of the arrangements made to deal with the problem of migration to the city from the famine areas. The report indicates that the volume of such migration was sufficient to cause grave concern to the authorities.

We read that 'on the 4th December (1876) the Commissioner of Police at Madras was authorized to arrange for opening places where cooked food could be daily provided for the suffering poor, as there were many persons among the numbers flocking into the town who were unable, from age or weakness, to avail themselves of the public works in progress'.[2]

Migration towards the city apparently increased so rapidly that steps to check it were devised. 'On the 21st the arrangements made by the Collector of Chingleput for forming relief camps at the Red Hills, at Pallaveram, and at Poonamalle, to prevent the influx of destitute ryots and their families into Madras, were approved.'[3] And again, 'on the 26th the Government sanctioned the adoption of measures for gratuitously relieving in their own villages the sick and infirm poor who were unable to work (and who in more prosperous

[1] *Review of the Madras Famine*, 1876-8 (Madras), 1881.
[2] [illegible]., p. 25.
[3] [illegible]w *of the Madras Famine*, 1876-8, p. 26.

times were either fed by their friends or by public charity) in order to prevent their wandering to relief-houses.'[1]

A little later there was added to these arrangements for checking the flow of migrants to the city, a provision for the removal from the city of 'large numbers of paupers' whose presence was adjudged a menace to the public health.

> In consequence of the large numbers of paupers collected at the relief-houses in the Town of Madras and of the appearance of cholera and the increasing death-rate, the Government, on the 9th January, ordered the Commissioner of Police at Madras to establish a pauper camp at the Red Hills, about 6 miles from the town, to accommodate 6,000 inmates. To this camp he was ordered to send the paupers in the Madras relief-houses, and as soon as the inmates of the camp became able to work, they were to be transferred to the nearest relief-works available in the Chingleput District.[2]

These quotations throw a good deal of light on the census figures for the city for 1881 and account largely for the fact that despite scarcity and famine in the presidency, the increase in the city population was relatively small. This rigid control of migration combined with the relief provided in the rural areas by the operation of the Famine Code placed an effective check on the growth of Madras city during the period. The reason suggested earlier—i.e. the natural preference of the South Indian for his village, was probably a not unimportant contributory factor. There is an allusion in the *Review of the Famine* which suggests that it was difficult in some cases to persuade people in famine-stricken areas to migrate to centres where relief-work was in progress, and the report comments on 'the not unnatural dislike entertained by many of the natives of the country to moving from the immediate vicinity of their houses, and the passive resistance offered to any such change, however beneficial to those concerned.'[3]

Effects of Inflation

When prices rise as a result of monetary inflation due to such factors as an increase in the circulating medium or an extension in credit, then the general argument that Indian agriculture benefits by a high price level would probably hold good. Between 1901 and 1911 the price level in India was probably affected considerably by the increased supply of

[1] *Review of the Madras Famine*, 1876-8, p. 26.
[2] ibid., p. 35.
[3] ibid., p. 41.

gold from the world's mines. 'The amount of gold reserves in 31 important banks and treasuries of the world rose from £296,031,000 on 31st December 1889 to £866,856,000 on 31st December 1910.'[1] 'The direct effect of the increased production of gold in raising prices is not necessarily great.' But the 'indirect effect in enlarging the volume of credit to a substantial extent'[2] forces prices up.

During this period when the world's gold reserves increased rapidly, prices in India rose considerably. The effect of this rise in prices upon agricultural conditions may be partly measured by the following table in which the distribution of population by selected occupations is shown for 1901 and 1911.

Distribution of Population by Selected Occupations (1901 and 1911)

	(*Percentages*)	*1901*	*1911*
A.	Production of Raw Materials ...	69·1	73·8
	Exploitation of the surface of the earth (mainly pasture and agriculture)	*69·0*	*73·6*
B.	Transformation of Raw Materials	*19·2*	*18·1*
	Industry	11·8	11·2
	Transport	1·4	1·7
	Trade	6·0	5·2

This table indicates that during this decade there was a marked increase in the number of people engaged in agricultural occupations and a corresponding decrease in the number of those employed in industry and trade.

Conclusions

It may therefore be said that in a period of high prices which are due to scarcity or famine there may be a stimulus towards migration to the city, but in a period of high prices which are the result of inflation there is a definite check upon such migration in the advantages which agricultural occupations offer in such a period. When both causes operate together to raise the price level, the balance would be in favour of reduced migration to the city.

On the other hand low or falling prices may be due to: (1) deflation; or (2) abundance; and it is particularly the

[1] Datta, *Report on the Enquiry into the Rise of Prices*, vol. I, p. 103.
[2] ibid., vol. I, p. 106.

low or falling prices of agricultural products which are due to deflation which provide that stimulus to migration that causes the city population to leap upwards.

There is a Kanarese proverb which may be translated: 'After ruin, go to the city.' The Royal Commission on Labour in India commented on industrial migration as follows:[1]

> Emigration has always arisen mainly from the difficulty of finding an adequate livelihood in one's native place, and this is the predominant force which impels the Indian villager to seek industrial employment. Over large parts of India, the number of persons on the land is much greater than the number required to cultivate it and appreciably in excess of the number it can comfortably support. In most areas, pressure on the land has been increasing steadily for a long time and a rise in the general standard of living has made this pressure more acutely felt. There has always been a substantial class of landless labourers, earning a meagre living in good seasons and apt to be reduced to penury in bad ones. The loss of land through indebtedness, the need or desire of a landlord to increase his own cultivation, quarrels, the death of the title-holder and other causes, bring fresh recruits to this class. Among those who retain tenancies, various changes may operate to render a holding insufficient for those dependent on it. An increase in the number of members of the family, a rise in rent, the growth of debt, all contribute to force the agricultural worker to abandon his ancestral occupation.

Thus the migration which inflates the population figures in the city may be broadly described as the 'migration of despair' rather than the 'migration of hope', though there will probably always be found a section of the migrants whose move to the city from rural areas is inspired by enterprise, the possibility of a new freedom or the hope of fortune.

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour*, 1931, pp. 14-15.

PART III

HOUSING

CHAPTER VI

GENERAL HOUSING CONDITIONS

FOR the purposes of the Indian census a house has been defined as 'the dwelling place of one or more families having a separate principal entrance from the common way'.[1] In 1931 this definition was modified to 'every dwelling with a separate main entrance',[2] in order to bring it into 'closer accord with the true habitation unit'.[3]

This general definition of a house covers every form of dwelling place from the palatial residence of the rajah to the mud and thatch hut or the ramshackle erection made of old kerosene tins which is often the home of the Adi-Dravida. The average 'middle-class' house in Madras Presidency has been very well described by Mr. W. Francis in the Census Report of 1901.[4] It is 'very uniform in pattern, except that the Deccan houses usually have a flat roof. It is one-storied and is often built so as to face exactly one of the cardinal points of the compass. Its rooms are placed round a central court open to the air in the midst of which is often a kind of altar carrying a plant of the *tulasi*, or holy basil, which the women of the household tend. From this court a small hall leads to the front door. This is flanked on either side by a verandah which is not considered to be a part of the house proper, and may therefore be used by lower classes who would pollute the dwelling if they entered the inner court. Over the door is often hung a garland of mango or margosa leaves to fend off evil spirits, and on either side of it are triangular recesses in which to place lights at the feast of Dipavali and on other red-letter days. The bottoms of the doorposts are usually smeared with saffron and kunkumam by the women on Fridays in honour of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Prosperity, and a small space in

[1] *Census of India,* 1901, vol. XV, Madras, part I, p. 15.

[2] *Census Tables: City of Madras*, 1931, p. 5.

[3] 'The older definition brings in terms not essential to the enquiry, e.g. families and common way, and superfluity in definitions is a prolific source of error. The change might be expected to swell the number of census "houses" by giving full effect to sub-division; actually this effect is less than might be expected, for Madras has shunned the tenement form of building and most sub-division is such that the dwellings would form a unit under either definition.' (p. 5, City of Madras, 1931.)

[4] *Census of India,* 1901, vol. XV, Madras, part I, pp. 15 and 16.

front of the doorway is swept clean, sprinkled with cowdung water and (except on days of mourning or misfortune) ornamented with patterns cleverly drawn by the women with chunam and powdered rice. The houses of the lower classes become gradually simpler and simpler as one descends the social scale until they end in a hut with mud walls, a thatched roof and often only one room.' This account, though written thirty-five years ago, is still an accurate description of an average middle-class house in almost any village or country town in Madras Presidency. It would also apply to a large proportion of such houses in Madras city, and is, for that reason, worth quoting in full. But the old uniformity in design and in domestic practice is not, of course, maintained in the city as it is in the country. There is an increasing number of two-storied houses, and, while the majority of the middle-class houses in the city retain the courtyard pattern, there are many structural modifications in the old courtyard plan and an infinite variety of new types of architectural design, good and bad, but mostly bad.

The houses in the city may be classified as thatched, tiled and terraced. This classification was adopted in the 1871 census tables and the number of houses in each category enumerated. This practice was not followed, however, in subsequent censuses, and it is not possible to give the precise number of houses in each class in 1931.

Thatched Houses

In Madras city there are many spaces known as 'hutting grounds' upon which are erected, by the poorer classes of the community, dwellings usually made of mud and thatch. Some of these hutting grounds are the sites of early villages, others were formerly open spaces which have been more recently alienated for the purpose of housing. The tenants usually pay ground rent and erect the huts at their own cost. These are very inexpensive—costing only a few rupees, and consist normally of one room only. They are relatively impermanent and liable to destruction by fire or heavy rains. The thatched roofs—made of rice straw or (more often) of palm leaves—are easily combustible, and the mud walls frequently crumble away and collapse in the monsoon rains.

The dwellings themselves are often unfit for human habitation, and they are usually set in close proximity to one another and in surroundings that are generally highly insanitary.

This type of housing has been possible in Madras city because of the large area which the city covers, and the extent of the 'hutting' areas and the number of thatched dwellings is surprisingly large in a city of such importance. In 1871 there were 10,752 huts or houses of this type.[1] In 1931, the number of thatched dwellings was not recorded, but it was certainly considerably larger. The Report for the latter census contains the following paragraph:

> A sidelight on the nature of many Madras dwellings is given by the fact that 14,000 metal number plates were issued during the enumeration. In other words, a number of dwellings existed offering no surface on which a number could be painted, not even a substantial doorpost or indeed a door at all. They consist generally of a low mud wall plus a palm thatch, and can be found in rows in the heart of the city and on its margins, generally associated with the depressed classes and often bearing rents of surprising dimensions.[2]

The writer was associated with an unofficial enquiry[3] into the conditions in the slums of Madras city in 1932. For the purposes of this enquiry a 'slum' was regarded as synonymous with a hutting-ground or 'cheri'.[4] A list of 158 such 'slums' was provided by the officials of the Corporation of Madras; and it is an interesting indication of the rapidity with which these hutting grounds spring up that in the course of the investigation the workers found 23 new 'slums' not included in the official list! Excluding blocks of less than 20 families or huts, a total of 181 hutting grounds were visited. These were scattered throughout the entire city—about 140 of them being located in outlying areas and 41 in the interior divisions of the city. We shall have occasion to return later to the detailed results of the enquiry. Here it is sufficient to state that it was estimated that in these 181 'slums' there were living 40,582 families.[5] This estimate was not based upon a detailed census. Such a census was beyond the resources of a small unofficial organization. The total estimate

[1] *Report on the Town of Madras*, 1871, p. 72.
[2] *Census Tables: City of Madras*, 1931, p. 5.
[3] The enquiry was carried out under the auspices of the Madras Sanitary Welfare League. This Society published a Report summarizing the results of the investigation in February 1933. The offices of the League are at the Servants of India Society's Building, Royapettah, Madras.
[4] A 'cheri' is the Tamil term used for the villages or hamlets occupied by Adi-Dravidas.
[5] A General Report on the Conditions of the Slums of Madras, Madras Sanitary Welfare League, 1933, p. 5.

was, however, made after personal investigation in each 'slum' by a responsible social worker, who in each case was instructed to make a careful estimate of the number of huts in the 'slum' and, where possible, to consult the local 'headman'. This is obviously not a watertight method and a margin of error in the final figures is probable. Precision has never been claimed for this estimate but despite wide publicity it has never been seriously challenged. It has, in fact, been broadly confirmed by the figures furnished by the works department of the Corporation of Madras for the information of a Special Housing Committee appointed by the Corporation in 1933.[1] The population of the 'slum' areas was given as 202,910. It will be seen that this estimate is exactly five times the number of families estimated as living in the 'slums' by the workers of the Madras Sanitary Welfare League in 1932. It would appear that the latter estimate was accepted by the Corporation authorities and that they based their calculations on the assumption that there are, on the average, five persons per family.[2]

Despite this apparent confirmation by the officials of the Corporation, the estimate of 40,482 slum families is, in the judgement of the writer, exaggerated, and there is an urgent need for an accurate census.[3]

Tiled Houses

Of the non-thatched houses, by far the greater proportion are 'tiled'. In 1871 it was estimated that 68 per cent. of the houses in the city were tiled. This proportion has probably decreased considerably as a result of the definite increase in thatched accommodation and a probable increase in 'terraced' houses. Tiled houses vary greatly in size and in quality. Some are substantial, being built in brick and mortar; some are built of sun-dried brick; others are built of brick in mud (a cheap and popular form of construction) and many tiled roofs cover walls of hardened clay. The

[1] These estimates were submitted by the Works Department and recorded in the minutes of the Committee, but were not subsequently published in the Committee's Report.

[2] As will be shown later families of five and more are exceptional rather than normal.

[3] An estimate, said to be based on a 'complete' survey of the slums of the city, was quoted in the *Report of the Special Housing Committee* (p. 13). The number of slum huts was estimated at 15,942 and the total population 'about a lakh'. No further details are given, and such details would probably indicate that the figures were not 'complete'.

roofing of these 'tiled' houses is also varied, but the most popular roofings in houses of this type are with Mangalore tiles, or with the older indigenous type known as 'country' tiles.

Mangalore tiles[1] are laid in much the same manner as the slates or tiles familiar in England, except that they are so grooved as to fit together securely, without the necessity for nailing, at the points at which they overlap. The roof, which is surmounted by a ridge of 'V'-shaped coping tiles secured by cement, provides a single-layer of tiling. Usually this is supplemented and strengthened with plasterwork underneath, but in some cases the bare tiles are left to provide a very inadequate protection from a scorching sun or from rain, which, when accompanied by driving wind, may be forced upwards underneath the tiles.

The main advantage of this type of roofing lies in its light weight. Mangalore tiles may be erected on lighter joists and rafters than can be used in the case of 'country' tiles.

These latter tiles, however, provide a much more solid and adequate roof for a tropical climate. They are very simply made and are also simple in erection. The tiles, which are about one foot in length and about six inches across, are curved. They are laid in rows from the coping to the lower edge of the roof, each tile heavily overlapping the tile above and the tile below. Alternate rows of tiles are laid convexly and concavely with the edges of each row resting in the curved centres of the row on each side, so as to afford complete protection. The coping is provided by a convex, horizontal row of tiles, laid closely as in the case of the roof sides.

These roofs of 'country' tiling if in good repair give complete protection from the sun and the rain, and, in addition to being more solid and heavy than the Mangalore tile roofing, they are much more handsome.

Tiled houses, especially those which are roofed with 'country' tiles, are usually single-storied. The interior of the house, in so far as it is possible to make any generalization at all, conforms in a majority of cases to the general description of a South Indian house quoted at the beginning of this chapter.

[1] So called because first manufactured in Mangalore, on the west coast of Madras Presidency, to a design introduced by the industrial missionaries of the Basel Mission.

6

The problems which surround the question of middle-class housing in the city of Madras are mainly related to overcrowding and to these we shall return later.

TERRACED HOUSES

To complete this account of the main types of houses in the city, it is necessary to indicate what is meant by a 'terraced' house. The Madras builder has developed a form of brick roofing which withstands a tropical climate better than most flat roofs, and the Madras terraced roof is justly famous. The method by which this roof is made is of interest. The basis of the roof is a series of horizontal wooden joists laid fairly close together and resting in the walls. Upon these joists shallow bricks are laid in a diagonal formation. Each brick rests on its narrow side upon the joists and its flat side rests in a vertical position against the next brick, where it is secured by mortar. A horizontal wall of single brick is thus built right across the joists. When this foundation has had time to dry, a thick pulp of cement and sand and broken brick is spread on top. This mixture is usually laid on to a thickness of about six inches or more. It is then attacked by an army of cooly women armed with implements shaped like butchers' choppers but made of wood. With these weapons they proceed to beat the surface of the cement pulp and the process is continued for several hours until every inch of the roof has been beaten and the mixture become thoroughly integrated and solid. These cooly women, in bright-hued saris, perched on their haunches across a roof and sleepily wielding their wooden beaters in time to the lilt of a Tamil song, are a familiar picture in Madras. When this stage of the work is complete and the sun has dried out the moisture, the final surfacing is done with concrete and the roof is finished. A well-made Madras terrace should be absolutely watertight, and its thickness gives unusually good protection from the heat of the sun.

'For practical purposes it may be concluded that a division of the town which has a large proportion of "terraced" houses is wealthy',[1] wrote the author of the 1871 Census Report. That is less true today, though the 'terraced' roof is still comparatively expensive. But in a country which is subject to violent cyclones, the flat roof is, on the whole, the most suitable type, and it is growing in popularity,

[1] *The Town of Madras*, 1871, p. 71.

though it is still true that it is normally found only on the more substantial type of house. In 1871 only about 10 per cent. of the total houses in the city were 'terraced'. No up-to-date figures are available, but this proportion must have increased very considerably. The 'terraced' roof is most commonly used today on houses of more than one storey and there has been a great increase in two-storied houses in recent years.

Numbers per House

The following table sets forth the average numbers of persons per occupied house in the city at each census since 1881. These figures cannot be regarded as strictly reliable as changes were made from time to time in methods of enumerating houses. But they are worth inclusion as the only picture that is now available of the approximate house accommodation in the city over the period under survey.

Madras City: Number of Occupied Houses and Number of Persons per House

Date	No. of occupied houses	Increase or decrease	Increase or decrease in population	No. of person per occupied house
1881	48,286	...	...	8·3
1891	60,103	+11,917	+46,670	7·53
1901	55,665[1]	– 4,438	+56,828	9·0
1911	59,595	+ 3,930	+ 9,314	8·7
1921	64,621	+ 5,026	+ 8,251	8·1
1931	73,845	+ 9,224	+120,319	8·7

[1] The reason for the decline in numbers since 1891 is that 'in 1891 the long rows of bazaars—small single rooms facing the street, with no cooking or sleeping apartments attached to them—which are such a common feature in some of the divisions, and in which no one ever sleeps at night, were all numbered as separate houses. As a consequence of this the number of houses increased between 1881-91 by over 24 per cent., though the population rose by only 11 per cent., and the average number of persons in each house fell from 8·4 to 7·5, which is not a usual symptom in a growing town.' *Census of India*, 1901, vol. XV, Madras, part I, p. 17.

An average figure for the city is not by itself of very great value, as there may be (and, in fact, are) wide differences between some of the divisions.

The following table sets out the numbers of occupants per house for the various divisions and is based on the census returns for 1931 :

Division	*Persons per House*	*Division*	*Persons per House*
1. Royapuram ...	5·7	16. Perambur ...	7·0
2. Tondiarpet ...	9·5	17. Choolai ...	11·1
3. Washermanpet ...	9·3	18. Pursawalkam ...	8·6
4. Korukkupet ...	6·2	19. Vepery ...	11·9
5. Harbour ...	8·7	20. Egmore ...	9·8
6. Muthialpet (excluding Fort) ...	11·1	21. Kilpauk ...	7·5
7. Katchaleswaranpet.	9·9	22. Nungambakkam ...	7·6
8. Kotwal Bazaar ...	11·5	23. Chintadripet ...	11·4
9. Ammen Koil ...	10·1	24. Tiruvateeswaranpet	9·8
10. Seven Wells ...	11·8	25. Chepauk ...	8·9
11. Sowcarpet ...	9·2	26. Triplicane ...	8·4
12. Peddunaickanpet.	12·8	27. Amir Mahal ...	9·9
13. Trevelyan Basin.	12·4	28. Mirsahibpet ...	6·7
14. Esplanade ...	12·1	29. Royapettah ...	7·3
15. Park Town ...	12·0	30. Mylapore ...	7·1

This table illustrates 'the difference between the congestion of the centre of the city and the spaciousness of its suburban margins',[1] for it is roughly true to say that the districts showing the highest numbers of occupants per house are huddled in the centre, while the lowest figures are found in the outlying divisions.

In 1921 an experiment, which was not repeated in 1931, was made in the enumeration 'in order to ascertain how many families in the city were living in a state of unhealthy congestion'.[2] When the enumeration was made, the number of rooms and the number of families in each house was noted,

[1] *Census Tables : City of Madras*, 1931, p. 5.
[2] ibid., 1921, p. 2.

and a table dealing with all houses containing five rooms or less was compiled. The result was as follows :

1921. Number of Rooms and Families per House (in Houses of 5 or less than 5 Rooms)

No. of Rooms	Total No. of houses	Number of houses with families: Equal to or below the No. of rooms	Exceeding the No. of rooms by one or two	Exceeding the No. of rooms by more than two
1	2	3	4	5
One ...	25,183	24,810	326	47
Two ...	7,616	7,454	148	14
Three.	6,244	6,133	100	11
Four ...	6,121	6,038	75	8
Five ...	4,507	4,462	41	4
Total ...	49,671	48,897	690	84

In 1921 the total number of houses in the city was 64,621, so that only 14,950 houses were omitted from this particular survey on the ground that they contained more than five rooms. Of the 50,000 odd cases examined 'there were 16 in a thousand in which a family had to share a room with others. If each of the married women over 15 living in the city is taken as representing a family, 100 families occupy 56 houses or there are two families to a house.'[1] In 1921 the average number of persons per house for the whole city was 8. In 1931 the average number was 8·7, so that the situation had grown definitely worse.

In order to understand the situation in Madras with regard to houses and families it is necessary to take into account the operation of the Joint Family System. This system is

> a survival of the time when social ties were based on consanguinity in the male, and not the female, line. It is still

[1] *Census Tables : City of Madras,* 1921, p. 2.

of the utmost importance as a social institution, for it is the foundation of the Hindu law of ownership and succession. The members of a family under this system must be males who are descended from a common ancestor in the male line, or who have been given that position by adoption, together with their wives and unmarried daughters. The prefix unmarried will be noted. A daughter on marriage is cut off from her father's family and becomes a member of her husband's family.[1]

Mr. L. S. O'Malley further points out[2] that 'in its complete form a joint family has a common property, a common house, with a common kitchen and common worship of a family idol or idols. If all the members of the family live together, the establishment is often more like a colony than a household. There may, for example, be a man and his wife, his brothers and their wives, his sons and their wives, his grandsons and their wives. There may be as many as four generations all living under the same roof, and the total number of persons may run to one hundred or even to hundreds, though such large numbers are rarer than they used to be.' Some fifty years ago it was estimated that one particular family included 500 persons;[3] in another joint family as many as 91 women have actually been enumerated.[4]

These cases are, of course, exceptional. In modern times the ancient solidarity of the Hindu family has weakened perceptibly, and it is in the cities that the forces of family disintegration have been most active. Nevertheless, its influences still persist; though it is seldom possible to find in the city the 'large convent-like mansions' necessary to house a complete joint-family, and though the increased mobility of modern life carries various members of most families off to different towns and cities on business or professional work, there remains a strong sentimental attachment to the 'ancestral' home, and where possible sections of the same joint family often live under the same roof.

The statistics of numbers of families per house must be read in the light of these facts. The operation of the traditions of the joint family system is probably partly responsible for the strange conditions of congestion revealed in the table

[1] O'Malley, *India's Social Heritage* (O.U.P.), 1934, pp. 120-1.
[2] ibid., p. 121.
[3] S. C. Bose, *The Hindus as they are*, 1881, p. 2.
[4] W. E. S. Holland, *The Goal of India*, 1918, p. 100.

on page 85. But we shall deal in detail, at a later stage, with the problem of overcrowding and it will then be seen that these deplorably unhealthy housing conditions are caused primarily not by the lingering social traditions of the Hindu family, but by a shortage of decent house-room and consequent rack-renting.

The Homeless

No general survey of the housing conditions and problems of Madras city would be complete which omitted a reference to those who have no houses. The warm and equable climate of Madras encourages the street-dweller and

a considerable element of the Madras city's population consists of persons who have no dwelling other than the side-walk and want none. Floating labour comes in by families to work in Wall-Tax Road and other such neighbourhoods. These family groups may be found camping out in many of the Madras thoroughfares. They are not tramps, but ordinary citizens in all but the possession of a house. Many persons found sleeping on house or shop pials and verandahs were probably classed by enumerators with the *bona fide* occupants of these last, and the dimensions of this contribution to the city's population are greater than is usually recognized.[1]

This floating or houseless population is difficult to measure, and in the census reports of recent years no attempt has been made to estimate it. An independent census was, however, taken by the Corporation staff, on behalf of the Special Housing Committee of the Corporation, in 1933. This census was carefully organised and some 78 enumerators were employed. Each municipal division was, for the purpose of this census, divided into 'circles' of manageable size, and each such circle was enumerated by a Sanitary Inspector or Overseer, with the assistance of other Corporation servants. A survey, preliminary to the final count, was made and every care was taken to ensure accuracy. One of the main difficulties of such a census is that many people who *have* homes sleep in the streets or on sidewalks and verandahs by choice, and it is difficult to distinguish them from the really homeless. There is also the possibility of a good deal of double counting of persons who may move from one place to another during the count. These difficulties were anticipated and an attempt made to meet them: (1) by instructing all enumerators to

[1] *Census Tables: City of Madras*, 1931, p. 6.

make careful enquiries as to whether street sleepers were genuine 'street dwellers' before enumerating them, and (2) by issuing distinctive slips to each person enumerated in order to eliminate, as far as possible, double counting.

The final count was commenced at midnight on November 25, 1933, and completed in about two hours.

> The persons enumerated were found sleeping on roadside, or platforms, *pials* of vacant houses, choultries, plank projections in front of shops, etc. A number of persons, members of a family or friends were found wrapped up in one single torn blanket on account of the cold weather. They were mostly clad in rags. Some were sleeping on torn mats with pillows and with a few vessels, pots and baskets close by. These utensils are used by them for cooking purposes. Some beggars and paradesees were found with tin vessels, sticks, etc. Their conditions, as a whole, were reported to be pathetic and deplorable.[1]

The allusion to 'cold' weather is explained by the fact that November falls in the North-East Monsoon period and is often very wet. It is not 'cold' by temperate standards, but the drop in temperature which normally accompanies heavy rain is sufficient to cause real discomfort to those who are inadequately equipped to meet it.

The total number of homeless people enumerated at this census was 10,749.[2] They were classified according to divisions as:

(1) People with a definite place of work,
(2) People with no definite place of work,
(3) Beggars and coolies, and
(4) Beggars.

These rather ambiguous categories are employed in the Report. (1) 'People with a definite place of work' presumably means persons in regular employment; (2) indicates casual labourers; and (3) casual labourers who find a subsidiary income by begging. It is to be regretted that there was no classification according to sex or age. There is no means of knowing how many of these 10,749 people who were living on the streets of Madras on November 25, 1933, were men, how many women, and how many children. It is probable that the great majority were men, but it is a fact which no observant person can fail to note in the streets of Madras that some of these street-campers live in families.

[1] *Report of the Special Housing Committee*, 1934, Madras Corporation, Appendix M, p. 174.
[2] ibid.

The following table sets out the results of the census :

Division No.	People with definite place of work	People with no definite place of work	Beggars and coolies.	Beggars	Totals for Divisions
1	40	9	...	37	86
2	14	35	...	[1]63	112
3	36	...	...	49	85
4	45	190	...	[2]98	333
5	246	583	...	...	829
6	25	64	...	2	91
7	10	200	12	2	224
8	752	537	...	190	1,479
9	45	107	...	...	152
10	50	386	...	8	444
11	180	13	...	94	287
12	114	...	...	85	199
13	215	...	...	109	324
14	940	...	...	174	1,114
15	981	3	...	38	1,022
16	196	21	...	233	450
17	154	...	86	161	401
18	...	...	...	68	68
19	...	444	..	447	891
20	453	268	...	156	877
21	3	48	...	6	57
22	2	35	...	15	52
23	16	158	83	13	270
24	75	2	...	45	122
25	...	118	...	46	164
26	...	104	...	...	104
27	108	2	...	2	112
28	23	7	...	79	109
29	10	6	...	[3]163	179
30	1	18	...	93	112
Totals Madras City	4,734	3,358	181	2,476	10,749

The largest number of houseless persons was found in the 8th division (Kotwal Bazaar). Over 1,000 were found in both the 14th (Esplanade) and the 15th (Park Town). These three divisions form a block immediately to the north-west of Fort St. George.

The lowest numbers were recorded in divisions 21 (Kilpauk) and 22 (Nungambakkam). These are wealthy residential localities occupied mainly by large bungalows and garden houses.

[1] 26 gipsies. [2] 26 gipsies. [3] 59 gipsies.

The Census Report concludes with the following paragraph :

> These unfortunate people generally make their abodes near the places where they find some means of living. The coolies working in the Harbour were found sleeping on the platforms on the sides of North Beach Road, verandahs of godowns and offices in Moore Street, Narayanappa Naick Street and Krishnan Koil Street. The coolies working in the Kotwal Bazaar were found mostly in Loane Square, pials and verandahs of offices and godowns in Malayaperumal Street. Similarly large numbers of the homeless were found sleeping in front of godowns and shops in Bunder Street, Godown Street, China Bazaar Road and on roadside platforms in China Bazaar Road, near Law College Police Station, and the open land adjoining that place, in Rasappa Chetty Street, Nyneappa Naick Street and Devaraja Mudali Street, on the sides of roads or verandahs and on plank projections in front of shops in the localities. In the area adjoining the Ripon Buildings were found large numbers of beggars sleeping on the pavements and on both sides of the General Hospital Road.[1]

[1] *Report of the Special Housing Committee*, 1934, Madras Corporation Appendix M, p. 175.

CHAPTER VII

HOUSING: PROBLEMS AND POLICIES

An examination of the official reports of the Corporation of Madras[1] issued during the last ten or fifteen years reveals a distinct, if somewhat reluctant, development in municipal opinion and policy in regard to the problem of housing in Madras city. In that development it is possible to detect three definite stages or periods of evolution:

1. A period of *laissez-faire*,
2. A period of restricted (or piecemeal) intervention by the municipal authorities, and
3. A period, representing the latest phase, in which the principle of municipal responsibility has been theoretically accepted.

1. The Period of *Laissez-faire*

This is perhaps not a very accurate description of the state of almost complete apathy and drift which was characteristic until quite recently of the Madras municipality in its relation to the housing problem. The term *laissez-faire* does suggest a policy—albeit a negative policy of non-intervention. It is not strictly accurate to describe a lack of awareness of a problem as a *policy* of *laissez-faire*. It is not until comparatively recent years that the city of Madras has shown anything that could be described as a serious awareness of the existence of a housing problem. An occasional allusion to bad housing conditions is to be found in official reports prior to 1925, but little to suggest the existence of any kind of policy and nothing in the way of serious suggestion as to remedies. If, at this time, the Corporation of Madras was aware of the existence of a housing problem and of the relation between housing and public health, it was very successful in concealing its concern from the ordinary citizen.

There was no serious legislative difficulty. The existing legislation provided for (1) expenditure on model dwellings

[1] Annual Administration Reports. Annual Reports of the Health Department.

and the encouragement of co-operative building under Rule 4 (*a*), Schedule V of the Madras City Municipal Act (1919); and (2) provision of sites and the construction of houses for the labouring classes within Town Planning Schemes under section 4 (*k*) and (*l*) of the Madras Town Planning Act. For financial assistance for such schemes Section 32 of the Act provided for the creation of a Provincial Town Planning Fund. This fund had not been constituted.

There was in existence, however, an institution known as the Madras City and Suburban Town Planning Trust, but the few schemes proposed or initiated by this body proved, almost without exception, to be abortive or ineffective. One successful town planning scheme[1] initiated by the Trust in 1922 has owed its success mainly to the fact that the Trust relinquished control of it a year later. The financial basis of the Trust was never assured and therein lay the main cause of its ineffectiveness. The existence of this moribund Town Planning Authority contributed in some measure to the attitude of indifference to housing and planning which characterized the outlook of the Corporation.

In order to trace the evolution of the housing policy of the Corporation of Madras in recent years, it is necessary to go back to conditions in the War and immediate post-War period.

The mortality rate in the city (which has never been low) rose sharply in the year 1916. The following years (1918 and 1919) were marked by the abnormally high figures of the post-war 'influenza' epidemic. The rate dropped steeply in 1920, but still remained much higher than in 1916, and showed throughout the next few years a marked tendency to rise. Concern as to the health of the city led to the appointment by the Government of Madras of a Committee 'to enquire into the health of the city; to ascertain as far as possible the causes for the high mortality in the city; and to suggest measures to effect improvement in the health conditions'.[2] This Committee produced an admirable report,[3] which contained the following statement with reference to housing and slum clearance:

> Private enterprise has done practically nothing during the past decade in the building of houses for the poorer classes.

[1] The Mambalam extension.
[2] Madras, G.O. No. 219, P.H., dated 20th July 1926.
[3] *Report of the City High Mortality Committee, Madras*, 1927.

The Corporation has made one minor attempt which has failed, but conditions are so serious that we consider that the time has come for the Madras Town Planning Trust to be allowed to function, so that it may proceed with the opening up and rebuilding of slums and overcrowded areas. The Madras Town Planning Trust so far has been a mere advisory body, and, having no income and no executive, it has found itself unable to work the Town Planning Act. We suggest that the present Act should be revised where necessary, that the Town Planning Trust be initially financed by grants from Government, and that it be empowered to engage the necessary engineering and other staffs, so that it may carry through improvement schemes for the worst of the slums and overcrowded areas in the city. The Town Planning Trust also should be required to cater for the population living in the 120 odd private and Government cheries and hutting-grounds scattered all over the city. Various unsuccessful attempts have been made by the Corporation from time to time to compel the private owners of these cheries to carry out sanitary improvements or to provide the minimum of sanitary conveniences, but no progress has been made so far as we are aware. Amendment of the City Municipal Act should be made in this respect, especially if it be the case that Government auditors have objected to the Corporation even sweeping and cleaning lanes and paths in these areas, a point noted in the Health Officer's Special Report of 1925.[1]

This last sentence throws a curious sidelight upon the unimaginative compartmentalism of the Government of Madras at that time, and incidentally reflects fairly well the public opinion of the period in respect of housing and sanitation. Improvement was desirable only to the extent to which it could be obtained without any financial outlay! The City High Mortality Committee's Report concludes the section on housing with the statement : 'We are convinced that with improved water-supplies, drainage and conservancy, and the opening up of slums, the provision of additional housing accommodation would quickly lower the general death-rate from respiratory diseases.'[2]

Despite these vigorous comments and practical recommendations, the question of housing continued to be neglected. The Corporation was clearly perturbed about the high death-rate, but nervous of any measures to reduce it which were likely to involve increased taxation or to disturb vested

[1] *Report of the City High Mortality Committee, Madras*, 1927, part I, p. 23.

[2] ibid., p. 23.

interests. Public opinion on the whole subject was feeble or non-existent and a slack if not incompetent administration was permitted merely to solace its soul with pious resolutions which it made no serious effort to carry out.

New slums and hutting-grounds were springing up all over the city and the situation was obviously getting out of hand. The Royal Commission on Labour in India which visited the country in the cold weather of 1929-30 found that 'in Madras city, 25,000 one-roomed dwellings shelter 150,000 persons or one-fourth of the population', and remarked that 'the general shortage of houses is so acute that many hundreds of workers are entirely homeless and live on the streets or on the verandahs of godowns in the vicinity of the harbour'.[1] Then follows a vivid account of the way in which 'cheries' or slums grow. It is written of Madras Presidency in general; but applies equally to Madras city.

> Many of the poorer classes, seeking in vain for accommodation, squat on private land and build flimsy shelters to serve as homes. When the landowner's demands for ground rent become excessive, these people move to other sites equally unsuitable and precarious. Eventually scattered 'cheries' spring up where overcrowding and bad sanitation produce their usual deleterious effects. For the most part these colonies receive little attention from the authorities. More often than not the primary necessities of life are altogether inadequate. Even where piped water supplies are available, the nearest taps may be far distant, so that water is obtained from unprotected surface wells. The lack of roads gives municipal cleansing staffs an excuse for their neglect of conservancy. For want of drainage and in the absence of latrines streams of sewage filter over the pathways. It is not surprising that epidemic disease frequently manifests itself in these plague-spots and that both the sickness and mortality-rates of their inmates reach high levels.[2]

The Royal Commission regarded as 'the one pleasing feature of the situation in the presidency' the work done by the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills Company in Perambur, in Madras city. This company has made a serious effort to provide sanitary and adequate housing accommodation for the workers in its mills as it has in other ways set an example to the rest of India in industrial welfare work. Four model villages have been constructed with houses of suitable design on sites well laid out and provided with roads, water and

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, p. 274.
[2] ibid., p. 275.

lighting. 'A nominal rent of Re. 1-8 per month is charged and neither sub-letting nor occupation by tenants in other employ is permitted.'[1]

This commendable effort at industrial housing stood in marked contrast to the general condition of working-class accommodation in the city, but it touched only the fringe of the problem, for even at the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills in 1929-30 'only 10 per cent. of the mill workers had so far been accommodated, and the great majority still live in houses rented from private landlords or crowd into huts erected by themselves'.[2]

Such was the situation at the end of 1929. The municipal authorities were uneasy but timid. They had embarked on a few minor housing schemes for Corporation employees such as sweepers and cart-drivers,[3] but fear of large financial commitments had produced a disinclination to become involved in the task of general re-housing, which had grown to such enormous dimensions. Some attempt had been made to bring pressure to bear on private slum landlords to improve their properties, but these efforts were described in an official Corporation report as 'feeble and desultory'.[4]

In the Report of the Health Officer of the city for 1926,[5] there appears a passage which indicates that Dr. Govinda Pillai, then in his first year of office, saw clearly the need for a vigorous and well-planned attack on the problem of housing. He wrote:

> If substantial results are to be expected there should be a bold and clear-cut housing policy. It should be remembered that Madras city is far behind even most of the towns in the Presidency in regard to development. The various schemes, such as the Choolai scheme, the Mambalam scheme, etc., are still awaiting funds. What is really required is that we should take up this question so as to bring about a comprehensive development scheme for the entire city, a scheme that will be based on a scientific as well as a business point of view.

At this stage, however, the advocate of a 'comprehensive development scheme for the entire city' was as a voice crying in the wilderness. The attitude of the Municipal Council at this time was governed by the fear of increased taxation and was indicated in the critical comments of the Director of

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, p. 275.
[2] ibid.
[3] *City of Madras: Official Handbook*, 1933, p. 138.
[4] *Administration Report of the Corporation of Madras*, 1920-1, p. vi.
[5] p. 3.

Town Planning with the Government of Madras in a recent speech.[1] 'Madras, as compared with other cities, crippled its services and particularly its development, because of the fact that at a time of panic a few years ago it reduced its property tax by 3½ per cent. It has never got over that retrograde step.'.

What we have described as the period of *laissez-faire*—a period which reflects little credit on the civic administration—may be regarded as having continued until 1929.

2. The Period of Restricted or Piecemeal Intervention

During 1930 the Corporation received a grant of five lakhs[2] of rupees from the Government of Madras for the initiation of housing schemes.[3] This marked the beginning of a new policy on the part of the municipality towards housing. The Corporation proceeded to develop schemes for re-housing in several particularly bad areas and to allocate grants for the improvement of other slums. As yet there was no serious contemplation of a large-scale policy of slum clearance and rehousing. The work was undertaken in patches and represented little more than a gentle nibbling at the problem. But the fact that the municipal authorities had embarked on a policy of intervention and reconstruction, however piecemeal, indicated the abandonment of the old attitude of *laissez-faire* and an admission of public responsibility for housing conditions in the city. This was a distinct step forward.

For several years this piecemeal policy was pursued with vigour, if without much method, and considerable sums of money were spent on slum improvement.

Three main methods of improvement were employed :

(*a*) Replanning of sites in order to open up congested areas and provide them with roads, water, drainage, lights, etc.

(*b*) Building schemes, the development of new housing areas; and

(*c*) The erection of plinths, as an alternative to houses, on planned sites.

[1] *The Madras Mail*, October 24, 1936, p. 6.
[2] A lakh = 100,000.
[3] *City of Madras : Official Handbook*, 1933, p. 138.

(a) *Replanned Sites*

Several slum areas were opened out 'by the acquisition of streets, laying out roads and drains, and providing water and electric lights'.[1] Of these, typical examples are Suparigunta (24th Division), Rope Godown Cheri (2nd Division) and Oobrapalayam (21st Division). These were all undrained, congested and exceedingly unhealthy areas. The Corporation replanned the streets, acquired such houses as obstructed the proposed plan and laid out new roads. They did not erect new houses, but left the house-owners to reconstruct their own property in accordance with the new lay-out, and the areas have been described as 'improved beyond recognition'.[2] The cost of this replanning was as follows:

			Rs.
Suparigunta	...	...	1,50,000
Rope Godown Cheri	...	...	60,000
Oobrapalayam	...	...	5,000[3]

Similar methods were followed elsewhere in the city and a number of the most unwholesome slum areas were replanned, while many other schemes for improvement were sanctioned or in course of execution at the end of 1933.

(b) *Building Schemes*

In addition to replanning the sites of several slum areas, the Corporation undertook the complete reconstruction of a few fairly large slums and quite a number of smaller ones. The old huts and houses were demolished and the sites cleared for the erection of new houses, the municipality making itself responsible for the entire reconstruction. The largest of these schemes was at Cemetery Road, where 178 houses were erected, others were at Vasapmode where there were 147 houses, at Conran Smith Nagar where there were 106, and at Bogipalayam where there were 75. At the end of 1933 two other fairly large rehousing schemes were under construction at Bogipalayam and in the Harbour Division where blocks of two-storey tenements were being erected—110 tenements in each place. Normally the two-storied building is to be discouraged for housing of this type in Madras city. Experience has proved that the flat system does not always conduce to harmonious relations between the

[1] *Report of the Special Housing Committee, Corporation of Madras*, 1934, p. 35.
[2] ibid., p. 35.
[3] ibid., p. 35.

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tenants and since Madras is endowed beyond most cities with the advantages of space, huddled tenements have happily been generally avoided. The tenements referred to above were of necessity erected on restricted sites and two-storied buildings were constructed. Various other smaller housing schemes were undertaken, and altogether considerable sums of money were spent on this piecemeal policy.

The following table shows the number of houses built by the Corporation up till 1933, with the cost of construction, and the monthly rentals charged in each case :[1]

Municipal Housing Schemes prior to 1933

Place	No of houses	Cost of scheme in Rupees	Monthly rental per house	Approximate cost of each house[2]	Approximate per cent. return per annum, on capital outlay
		RS	RS A P	RS	
1. Palmyrah Kuppam ...	50	22,500	2 0 0	450	5%
2. Old Slaughter House Road ...	35	14,000	0 1 0	400	...
3. Cemetery Road...	143 }	52,270	1 0 0 }	363	3½%
,, ,, ...	1 }		0 8 0 }		
,, ,, ...	34	13,600	0 8 0	400	1½%
4. Kathiavakam High Road ...	36	9,550	0 1 0	265	...
5. Cochrane Basin Road ...	30	19,414	0 12 0	647	less than 2%
6. Salai Vinayagar Koil Street ...	14	8,400	2 0 0	600	4%
7. Vasapmode ...	147	73,500	1 8 0	500	3½%
8. Koravankulam...	64	43,327	0 12 0	677	less than 1½%
9. Harris Road ...	76	29,250	0 8 0	384	,, 1½%
10. Sami Reddi Cheri	50	32,094	2 8 0	642	5%
,,	11	16,500	3 8 0	1,500	3%
11. Anglo-Indian Model Houses.	20	26,120	(av.) R.7	1,306	5%
12. Jaghannadhapuram ...	30	20,000	1 8 0	666	2½%
13. Lloyd's Road ...	30	19,450	1 0 0	648	1¾%
14. Krishnampet ...	12	7,200	0 12 0	600	1½%
15. Conran Smith Nagar ...	106	1,21,755	2 0 0	1,148	2%
16. Bogipalayam ...	75	97,245	2 0 0	1,296	less than 2%
Totals ...	964	6,26,175			

[1] *Report of the Special Housing Committee, Corporation of Madras*, 1934, pp. 36 and 37.

[2] There is no indication as to whether cost of land has been included. It seems likely that in some cases, at least, it has not been.

In addition to the above list there were the tenements at Bogipalayam (110) and in the Harbour Division (110) which were not completed when the list was compiled in 1933. The estimated costs of these tenement schemes were: Bogipalayam, Rs. 86,380; Harbour, Rs. 94,260. Another large project which has been under discussion for several years and to which the Corporation is definitely committed is the reconstruction of the large fishing village of Parthasarathy Kuppam in the 26th Division (Triplicane). This slum is one of the most wretched and insanitary in the city and it is proposed that the site should be cleared and 300 houses or tenements erected to replace the existing huddle of miserable huts. Technical difficulties as to the ownership of the site have held up the scheme for several years and it has not yet been begun (1938).

It will be seen from the figures given in the table that these municipal housing schemes have varied greatly in capital cost and in returns through rentals. The cost of the houses has ranged from Rs. 1,500 to Rs. 265, and monthly rents from Rs. 3-8 to 1 anna. The Anglo-Indian houses which are let at an average monthly rent of Rs. 7 are not in the same category as the other schemes. The economic position and standards of life of the Anglo-Indian community are higher than those of the 'cheri' dweller. Though several of these schemes produce a return of 4 or 5 per cent. per annum on the capital outlay, the majority of them produce very much less, and cannot be regarded as economic.

As for the houses themselves, they doubtless represented in every case an enormous improvement on the conditions which they replaced, but in some cases the schemes are open to serious criticism from the point of view of architecture and town planning. The Bogipalayam scheme, for example, which is one of the largest and most expensive, suffers from bad planning. The houses are unattractive in appearance, and are built in parallel streets on the back-to-back principle. The level of the windows is low and as a result they are frequently kept shut in the interests of privacy.

The most serious defect of this piecemeal housing policy was that it represented no ordered policy at all. Individual schemes were rushed through without due consideration of all the factors involved or without any regard to their relation to the whole vast problem of housing. There was no general policy to govern individual cases and the determining factor in many instances was the energy or the importunity of the Divisional councillors concerned. This is the main explanation

of the wide variety in costs, types of houses, amounts of rentals, etc. For an expenditure of about 8,00,000 rupees rather more than 1,000 houses were built. This but touches the fringe of the housing needs of the city as a whole and there can be little doubt that this considerable sum of money might have been made to go further had it been spent in accordance with a carefully co-ordinated plan. It is certain that such a plan would have produced more uniform and satisfactory results in the actual housing accommodation provided. But the Corporation was as yet at the experimental stage in its housing policy and there was much that was tentative and hesitating in its attitude to the whole question at this stage.

(c) *Plinths*

In addition to replanning sites and undertaking building schemes, the Corporation experimented with a third type of reconstruction as an alternative to actual rehousing. This consisted in the erection on one or two chosen sites of concrete plinths, which were aligned according to a carefully designed plan along streets which were drained, lighted and provided with a water supply, bathing fountains and public latrines. The plinths were then rented to tenants who erected their own superstructures upon them. There were two main schemes of this type, one at Cochrane Canal Road costing Rs. 47,606, and the other on Lloyd's Road, costing Rs. 18,700.[1]

The Cochrane Canal Road Scheme was the earliest of these experiments and provided 129 plinths[2] which are raised two feet above the surrounding ground level.

> There are good roads and what appears to be excellent surface drainage. The space between the plinths is adequate. There is a reasonable number of water taps, a wash-house and two latrines. More latrines could well be provided, especially in view of the fact that those already existing are probably also used by inhabitants of adjoining 'cheries'. The streets etc. are clean.[3]

The cost of this project as given above was Rs. 47,606. But it is stated in the evidence submitted to the Special

[1] *Report of the Special Housing Committee, Corporation of Madras*, 1934, p. 37.

[2] *Printed evidence submitted to the Special Housing Committee* (Evidence of Madras Chamber of Commerce), 1933, p. 6.

[3] ibid., p. 6.

Housing Committee of the Corporation in 1933 by the representative of the Madras Chamber of Commerce that 'the total cost of the scheme including the raising of the ground level, provision of roads, lights, taps, etc., was Rs. 57,000'.[1] It is probable that the Rs. 47,606 estimate included the construction of the plinths only. The plinths are let at a rent of 8 annas per month each and on the basis of the Rs. 57,000 estimate of total cost, this represents a total return of Rs. 64-8-0 per month or Rs. 774 per annum, which works out at 1·31 per cent. 'The huts erected on the plinths . . . vary from quite substantial affairs to mere shelters.'[2]

The plinth method undoubtedly makes possible by less costly means than actual housing a great improvement in slum areas and has much to commend it, if complete rehousing schemes prove to be financially impossible. But the experiments undertaken have shown the necessity for more careful regulations regarding the types of superstructure to be erected on the plinths. It should also be possible to secure from such schemes a more economic return than 1·31 per annum, either by the reduction of initial costs or the charging of larger rents.

3. The Development of the Theory of Municipal Responsibility

The next landmark in the evolution of the housing policy of the Madras Corporation was the publication of the Census Report of 1931. The importance of the Census Report lay not in any suggestions which it made in reference to housing in the city—that did not lie within its province—but in the effect which the facts disclosed by the Census had upon the public opinion of the city.

It was revealed that over the inter-censal period (1921-31) the population of Madras had grown with quite phenomenal rapidity. The number of persons in the city had leapt up from 526,911 in 1921 to 647,230 in 1931 entirely by immigration. There was strong reason to believe, though no actual evidence to prove, that the great majority of these migrants to the city belonged to the very poorest classes and had gone to add to the congestion and increase the unhealthiness of the slums or to swell the numbers of the homeless who haunt the city streets.

[1] *Printed Evidence, Special Housing Committee*, 1933, p. 6.
[2] ibid.

During this period of rapid increase the building of houses tended to lag behind. Capital was not attracted to the type of housing that was most urgently required. The Corporation had taken over an extensive Town Planning Scheme at Mambalam on the south-west frontier of the city and it had grown with considerable rapidity. The available sites, however, were occupied mainly by large and fairly expensive bungalows and this important housing development contributed little if anything to the relief of the increasing congestion in the lower middle and labouring class localities in the city. Between 1921 and 1931, while the population increased by about 120,000 the increase in the number of houses was less than 10,000,[1] 'which means that for every additional house which was constructed there were more than 12 additional people. It should be noted that the need for houses caused by population movements of this character cannot be measured solely by the increase in the number of individuals; the important fact to be noted is the number of households as this determines the number of dwellings to be built.'[2] A rise in the marriage rate will produce a proportionate increase in the number of households in excess of the actual increase of the population as a whole. An increase in the number of households has been known to accompany a decrease in population.[3] In India the marriage rate remains fairly regular as marriage is well-nigh universal and normally takes place at regular age periods. But changes in traditional social practice in regard to family life are tending to increase the number of separate households. These changes are taking place much more rapidly in the cities than elsewhere. Under the old joint family system the marriage of a son did not usually involve the establishment of a separate household. The married couple continued to live under the parental roof. But the noticeable weakening of the joint family system has resulted in an increasing tendency for young married couples to establish separate households rather than continue to live in the old home with the joint family. This tendency has, together with the growth of the gross population, been a contributory factor in the shortage of houses in Madras city in recent years. Overcrowding in middle-class areas became acute. House rents

[1] *Report of the Special Housing Committee, Corporation of Madras*, 1934, p. 2.

[2] ibid.

[3] In countries other than India.

rose steadily while available accommodation tended to deteriorate.

The vital statistics for the city showed that, despite an ever-widening and increasingly efficient and expensive network of public health services, the health of the city was not improving in any marked way. Death-rates fluctuated slightly from year to year, but showed no marked or progressive downward trend. Infant mortality was appalling. Public opinion, stimulated by the efforts of a few groups of social workers, began to take shape, and, though never very coherent or sustained, it made itself felt. The Corporation—an authority not normally sensitive or responsive to public opinion—began to show signs of a growing uneasiness. And indeed the facts were alarming enough to shatter the complacency of the most stolid municipal authority.

The Health Officer of the city had emphasized for some time the close connection between housing and public health. Of the 1931 Census he wrote :[1]

> The growth of the population has been particularly large among the labourers and middle-class people who flock to the city in large numbers in search of livelihood. A study of the vital statistics of Madras indicates that the high death-rates and infantile mortality are more or less a constant feature among these classes of people and furnish unmistakable evidence of the lack of essential conditions for their healthy and normal living. Many and varied were the improvements effected in the municipal administration of the city during recent years. Yet, a comparison of the mortality rates shows that deaths from tuberculosis and respiratory diseases have increased during the past twenty years. The death-rate under tuberculosis rose from 0·9 per mille in 1913 to 1·6 in 1933, while that under respiratory diseases rose from 4·2 in 1913 to 9·2 in 1933. The striking increase in the death-rates under these two heads indicates that congestion and overcrowding have increased very rapidly during the past twenty years. . . . Bad housing conditions in the city have not only tended to increase the incidence of respiratory diseases but also have been the predisposing factors for the high death-rate in general and infantile mortality in particular. About one-quarter of the total deaths occurs amongst infants under one year. These appallingly high rates, in spite of the efforts of the Child Welfare Organizations, tend to show that, apart from the poverty, ignorance and superstition of the masses, bad housing forms the chief cause of the unsatisfactory state of affairs. . . . The problem of health is so closely

[1] Quoted in the *Report of the Special Housing Committee, Corporation of Madras*, 1934, pp. 3-4.

associated with housing conditions that it is difficult to achieve standing results unless a determined effort is made to improve these conditions by the provision of more sanitary dwellings at cheap rates and by a systematic campaign for the clearance of slums.

In the Annual Report of the Health Department for 1932, the following statement appears: 'Slum improvement has now become the most vital issue for Madras, transcending other civic problems. Unless this is tackled boldly and comprehensively the health of the city as a whole may be in peril.'

Similarly in the 1933 Report we read that 'a comprehensive programme for slum-clearance and eradication of overcrowding in dwelling-houses is a paramount need'.

The policy of *laissez-faire* in housing was now completely discredited. The subsequent and rather half-hearted programme of intervention on the part of the municipal authority had also proved inadequate—the facts of the census and the vital statistics had made that abundantly clear. A policy much more comprehensive and effective was demanded; and after months of discussion and agitation in the press and on public platforms the Corporation of Madras finally accepted in theory the principle of municipal responsibility for the reform of the housing conditions in the city, and on the 15th August 1933 appointed an *ad hoc* Committee to investigate the situation and formulate a policy. This Committee was instructed to 'enquire into the housing conditions in the city of Madras (with special reference to overcrowding, slum-clearance and housing of the poorer classes) and to evolve a comprehensive housing policy for the city and report what legislative and administrative action is, in the opinion of the Committee, necessary to remedy existing defects'.[1]

This Special Committee set to work with energy and efficiency and early in 1934 produced a report embodying the main results of its investigations and outlining an ambitious policy for the improvement of the housing conditions of the city.

From the diverse and multitudinous problems which surround the whole question of providing adequate housing accommodation in a large and growing Indian city, three major tasks emerge, each of the utmost importance to public health and well-being.

[1] *Report of the Special Housing Committee, Corporation of Madras*, 1934, p. 1.

(1) The provision of adequate and healthy accommodation for that large proportion of the population which is at present condemned to live in insanitary mud huts.

(2) The alleviation of overcrowding in so-called middle-class areas.

(3) The housing of the homeless poor and the habitual beggar.

The Special Housing Committee of the Corporation of Madras had important recommendations to make in regard to each of these tasks. In the following chapters each problem is taken separately for analysis, the relevant recommendations of the Special Housing Committee are examined, and an attempt is made to indicate the lines along which possible solutions for these vital problems may be sought.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SLUMS[1]

A 'SLUM' is defined in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* as a 'dirty back street or court or alley in a city'. For the purposes of this chapter it will be necessary, in order to avoid confusion, to give the term a much narrower connotation. Here the word 'slum' is used only in reference to the characteristic Madras 'cheri' which has already been described in some detail. This use of the word has been generally adopted in Madras and that, together with the fact that the slum problem of Madras is mainly (though not entirely) a problem of the 'cheries', is a sufficient justification for its adoption here.

The Special Housing Committee appointed by the Corporation in 1933 estimated that there were 189 slum areas in Madras city containing a total of 15,942 huts or houses.[2]

The problem of the Madras slum is threefold. It is concerned with (1) the setting or site; (2) the structures or dwellings; and (3) the habits of the slum-dwellers.

1. THE SETTING

Of the 189 slums in Madras city in 1933, the ownership of the sites was as follows :[3]

Private	144
Corporation of Madras	23
Government of Madras	15
Corporation and Private	2
Government and Private	1
Military and Private	1
Government and Corporation	1
Port Trust and Corporation	1
Port Trust	1
Total ...	189

[1] Some of the material contained in this chapter was submitted by the writer in evidence presented to the Special Housing Committee of the Madras Corporation in 1933.

[2] *Report of the Special Housing Committee,* 1934, p. 13. In the judgement of the writer the number of slum houses given by the Committee is probably underestimated (see ch. vi). It is an interesting indication of the rapidity with which slums were developing (despite the Corporation Housing Schemes) that the 1932 survey (referred to in ch. vi) found only 181 slums and that at that date the official list contained only 158.

[3] *Report of the Special Housing Committee,* 1934, pp. 38-45.

The slums situated on sites belonging to the Government have grown up, in some cases, as the result of squatters trespassing on open spaces and being permitted to remain there so long that they have become to all intents and purposes permanent colonists. Other Government sites have been allocated by the Labour Department to groups of the Depressed Classes. Some of these 'are required to pay a small ground rent annually and are subject to the nominal condition that if the land allotted to them is required by Government they should vacate it.'[1] On these sites the superstructures are frequently owned by the inhabitants.

The following statement made in evidence submitted by the Madras Government to the Royal Commission on Labour throws some light on conditions in Government slums in Madras city.[2]

Statistics regarding tenements in Government cheries in the city of Madras indicate the housing conditions of the workmen at Madras:

Character of dwelling	*No. of dwellings*	*No. of rooms*	*Monthly rent*	*Area in sq. ft.*
	A. Thatched Huts			
(1) With one room only ...	640	640	Rs. 1/8 to Rs. 2	64 to 80
(2) With one room and verandah.	310	310	,,	64 to 80
(3) With two rooms.	271	342	,, 2/0 to ,, 2/8	120 to 216
	B. Tiled Houses			
(1) With two rooms.	51	62	,, 1/4 to ,, 3/8	64 to 100
(2) With three rooms ...	100	300	,, 1/4 to ,, 3/8	64 to 100

The above figures relate to 12 labourers' cheries which occupy a total extent of 30 acres of land, fetching an annual lease rent of about Rs. 1,200 to Government. 7,022 workmen (or 1,757 families) including coolies, cartmen, weavers, spinners, constables, goldsmiths, bidimakers, sweepers, bricklayers, boatmen, motordrivers, rickshaw-wallahs and fishermen live in these cheries.

It would appear from this statement that in the majority of these Government slums the superstructures as well as the sites are owned by the Government.

[1] *A General Report on the Conditions of the Slums of Madras, Madras Sanitary Welfare League*, 1933, p. 4.

[2] *Royal Commission on Labour*, 1931, Evidence, vol. VII, part I, p. 11.

The Corporation 'cheries' are inhabited mainly by municipal employees. The majority of them have been rebuilt and are fairly well planned. But a few of these Corporation 'cheries' are 'no better than private slums' and 'are of mud and thatch or have roofs consisting of kerosene tins'.[1]

The privately owned slums 'as a rule do not possess the amenities found in Government or Corporation cheries' with the result that 'these slums are the most insanitary and unhealthy spots in the city'.[2]

To a very considerable extent the unhealthiness of the Madras slums is due to neglect of the sites as distinct from the dwellings. In the great majority of the city 'cheries', the water supply is insufficient, the public latrines inadequate, the drainage deficient and the street cleaning irregular. All this contributes largely to the general lack of sanitation and cleanliness. It will be of interest therefore to examine some of these needs and deficiencies which relate to the sites rather than the dwellings of the slums.

Water Supply

In 1932 the investigators of the Madras Sanitary Welfare League discovered 35 'cheries' in the city with a total estimated population of 15,000, where no municipal water supply whatever was available.[3] They considered that there were only 12 'cheries' in the city which were adequately provided with water, the standard of adequacy being calculated at 20 gallons per head per day.[4] This estimate is based on the mere fact of the existence of taps and on the assumption that those taps function at a consistent pressure throughout

[1] *Madras Sanitary Welfare League Report*, p. 4.
[2] ibid., p. 4.
[3] ibid., p. 6.
[4] *Madras Sanitary Welfare League Report*, pp. 6 and 7. Dr. Ghosh in his *Treatise on Hygiene and Public Health* gives the following estimate of the average amount of water necessary per person per day in India. (Quoted in *Sanitary Welfare League's Report*, p. 6.)

	Gallons per head
Household—	
Fluids as drink	0·33
Cooking	0·75
Ablution	5·00
Utensils and housewashing	3·00
Laundry washing	3·00
Water closets	3·00
Trade and manufacturing	5·00
Municipal (streets, baths, etc.)	5·00
Total ...	27·08

the day. Those who are familiar with slum conditions in Madras know that that is not ordinarily the case. Water pressure varies considerably and in many slums is cut off altogether during long periods and is often only available in the early morning and in the evenings.

It is a familiar sight to those who visit the 'cheries' to see a large group of women queuing up with their pots beside a tap which runs with painful slowness. One of the commonest complaints of the 'cheri'-dweller is of a shortage of water.

It is obvious that under existing conditions cleanliness and health are impossible for the people who live in these areas.

Public Latrines[1]

The public latrine is an institution of much greater importance in an Indian city than it is in the west. Private sanitary arrangements are a comparatively recent innovation in South Indian houses, and, as yet, they do not exist at all in the smaller houses of the poorer quarters of Madras city.[2] The occupants of these houses are entirely dependent upon the public conveniences, if they desire such refinements at all. Many do not, preferring to retain the habits of the village even in the city. And those who do frequently find it difficult or impossible to find a public latrine within reasonable distance of their homes, and are driven to use the streets or convenient open spaces. The result is that the streets and lanes of most slum areas in Madras are revoltingly filthy, being littered with human excrement. The following comments are taken from the *Report of the City High Mortality Committee.*[3]

> The habit of defecating indiscriminately in every available nook and corner and in every convenient side drain, of which we had abundant evidence during our inspections, causes a tremendous amount of soil, water, air and food pollution with consequent spread of intestinal infections. We are convinced from what we saw all over the city . . . that great numbers of

[1] This military term is used universally in South India.

[2] In a very few 'cheries' there are private latrines attached to each hut and in poor Mohammedan areas the 'gosha' women refuse to go to public latrines. But in a closely crowded area the private latrine may be a menace. 'One man's latrine is often next his neighbour's kitchen or sleeping place.' 'In the congested condition of these "cheries" it is highly unsatisfactory to have private latrines among the houses.' (*Madras Sanitary Welfare League's Report on the Slums*, 1933, p. 12.)

[3] Part I, p. 17 (1927).

people resort to this habit simply because of the insufficiency of suitable latrines.

The lack of a sanitary conscience, therefore, is not the sole cause for the indiscriminate deposition of excrement. No self-respecting person, be he cooly or municipal councillor, could be blamed for refusing to use some of the latrines we saw during our inspections. It was obvious to us that the existing numbers of public latrines are totally inadequate, as they were being used to such an extent that it was almost impossible for the sweepers to keep them clean. Large numbers of flush-out latrines are required and we are convinced that these would be used if they were made available. These latrines are all the more necessary because of the great lack, and even total absence, of private latrines attached to dwelling houses.

The question of the public latrine is thus of very considerable importance in relation to the 'setting' of the slums.

In Madras city there are three types of public latrine in general use :[1]

(1) *The sanded latrine*—a walled enclosure with a sand floor from which the excreta are scraped by a sweeper.

(2) *The dry latrine*—a walled enclosure with a cement floor and either a dwarf wall for squatting purposes or latrine pans and foot stones. For this type of latrine also a sweeper is required.

(3) *Flush-out latrines*—which flush automatically every 10 or 15 minutes and maintain themselves continuously in a serviceable condition. Such latrines can, of course, only be installed in areas where the underground sewerage system operates.

It was found in 1932 that of the 181 'cheries' in Madras, 55 had flush-out latrines, 54 had dry or sanded latrines and 72 had no latrine accommodation whatever.[2] Small wonder is it that the streets and open spaces near the slums are so filthy. The results of the indiscriminate fouling of the streets upon the health of the city are indicated in the very high death-rate from intestinal diseases. The figures for Madras, as compared with Calcutta and Bombay, are as follows :

Death-rate per 1,000 from Intestinal Diseases[3]

Bombay (1924)	3·02
Calcutta (1924)	4·83
Madras (1925)	8·19

[1] See *Sanitary Welfare League Report*, 1933, p. 9.
[2] *Madras Sanitary Welfare League Report*, 1933, p. 11.
[3] *Report of the City High Mortality Committee, Madras*, 1927, part I, p. 6.

'Towns with the most perfect scavenging arrangements have the lowest incidence of diarrhœas and dysenteries, and the converse equally holds good.'[1]

Hookworm is a disease very prevalent in Madras city and this may be attributed directly to the foul condition of many of the streets and the fact that so many people walk through those befouled streets in bare feet. The hookworm infection is conveyed through human excreta and the disease may be contracted through the contact of the soles of the feet with infected filth.

Probably for this reason the City High Mortality Committee condemned outright the sanded latrine.[2]

The dry latrine (as distinct from the sanded latrine) 'is less likely to spread disease, but the human element in its maintenance is its weakness, and rarely are such latrines really satisfactory in operation'.[3]

The only satisfactory type of public latrine is that operated by an automatic flushing system, and this of course requires both an efficient supply of piped water and an underground sewerage system. Water is laid all over the city, but the sewerage system is not yet complete. The latter is, however, sufficiently advanced in the more congested areas in the city to make flush-out latrines a possibility in those slum localities where they are most urgently needed.

In any plans for slum improvement or rehousing careful attention must be paid to this question of adequate flush-out latrine accommodation, which has hitherto been so appallingly neglected. A private flush-out latrine in every house in the city is, of course, the ideal, as it is the declared aim of the Corporation. A great extension in the use of private flush-out latrines has been made in recent years under the compulsion of the municipal authorities. But the system of private latrines cannot yet be applied to the houses of the poorest classes, and for that reason the greater attention must be paid in such areas to the provision of an efficient system of public conveniences.

Drainage

The efficient drainage of housing sites is an obvious necessity. In 1932 it was estimated that nearly 90 per cent.

[1] *Report of the City High Mortality Committee, Madras*, 1927, part I, p. 16.
[2] ibid., p. 17.
[3] *Madras Sanitary Welfare League Report*, 1933, p. 10.

of the 'cheries' in Madras were on low-lying land, and without proper drainage. Many of them are seriously flooded during the North-East Monsoon. 'In many of these "cheries" water rushes in from the road, so that whole areas become swampy and the water stands 2 to 3 feet deep. At such times the inhabitants are to be seen wading knee-deep from their houses. The houses themselves are so flimsy that many of them collapse during the monsoon, rendering homeless a number of families.'[1]

The cheerful patience with which these poverty-stricken people endure conditions of this kind year after year is amazing. But the persistence of such a state of affairs is a disgrace to a great city.

Even in the dry weather these 'cheries' are rendered dirty and insanitary through lack of surface drains to carry off sullage water from the houses. In many places the people have improvised arrangements of their own. 'They bury iron drums, perforated with holes at the bottom, just outside the houses' into which the sullage water is diverted. These cannot be emptied and the water soaks away so slowly that they often overflow. The result is a series of private cesspools 'full to the brim with slimy filth' which are a menace to the health of the whole area.

The difficulties of draining low-lying sites are recognized. Where drainage proves impossible, or so costly as to be prohibitive, the site is obviously unfit for housing, and in the interests of public health its use for that purpose should be prohibited. There are, however, many undrained and dangerously insanitary slum sites in Madras where such engineering difficulties do not exist, and they remain undrained and insanitary mainly because of the slackness, inefficiency and lack of foresight of the authorities.

Street Cleaning

Another of the main problems of the 'setting' of the slums in Madras is the difficulty of providing adequate conservancy arrangements. 'Generally street cleaning is done regularly twice a day in all the Government and Corporation "cheries" as well as in "cheries" where the roads have been taken over by the Corporation. Roads and lanes in private "cheries" are not swept and they are filled all over with rotting litter.'[2] In their report published in 1927, the City

[1] *A General Report on the Conditions of the Slums of Madras, Madras Sanitary Welfare League*, 1933, p. 14.
[2] ibid., p. 15.

High Mortality Committee passed very severe strictures on the efficiency of the conservancy system in the city[1] and made recommendations for a radical reorganization of the whole system. Some of these recommendations have been put into effect and the conservancy of the city has improved in recent years. It is, however, still deplorably inefficient in some of the slum areas; and the statement of the Health Officer of the Corporation in the Annual Report of the Health Department for 1934, that 'the work of the conservancy section continued to be satisfactory throughout the year'[2] simply means either that this responsible official does not know the conditions in some parts of the city or else that he is satisfied with a very low standard of efficiency in conservancy work.

'In many cases (in the "cheries") there is little or no conservancy, so that the streets are foul and unfit to walk in, while garbage lies rotting at every corner. Although the habits of the people are partly responsible for this state of affairs . . . heavy responsibility in this matter rests with the auhorities.'[3]

In seeking a solution for the problem of the Madras slums this whole question of street cleaning will demand serious consideration, for unless the streets are efficiently cared for and adequate arrangements for supplying and clearing dust-bins, etc. made, no mere building of houses is going to relieve Madras of its slums.

Hygiene means much more than environmental sanitation, but the requirements for improved environmental conditions should have the first call on available funds. These requirements are (1) a sufficient and pure water supply, (2) efficient sewerage, and (3) efficient collection and disposal of street and house rubbish and filth. It has been shown that all these amenities of life are deficient in Madras, and until these primary essentials are provided, money spent on the development of other and minor health activities will give an inadequate return, even though these other activities may be highly desirable in

[1] 'We feel compelled to publish the fact that at the time of our inspection, nearly two-thirds of the total number of motors used for this work had been out of repair for several weeks, and, as a result, the conservancy organization had failed to cope with the daily collections, and refuse amounting to many tons was perforce left to decompose in different parts of the city.' (*Report*, p. 18.)

[2] *Annual Report of the Health Department, Corporation of Madras*, 1934, Introduction, p. iii.

[3] *A General Report on the Conditions of the Slums of Madras, Madras Sanitary Welfare League*, 1933, p. 5.

communities where the civic and sanitary conscience is already in existence.[1]

Of the 189 slum sites the Special Housing Committee (1933) considered that there were only six which by reason of their location were entirely unsuitable for housing, and these, they recommended, should be entirely cleared and the occupants housed elsewhere. The remaining 183 were reported to be capable of such improvement as would render them fit for use as reasonably healthy housing sites.[2] The provision of adequate roads, drainage, water supply, lighting and latrines, and in some cases the raising or levelling of the area would render the great majority of the existing slum sites suitable for new housing schemes. Most of these slums are, however, unduly congested and any scheme for replanning would involve in most cases the displacement of a proportion of the families at present living on the existing sites. This will necessitate the finding of new sites and the development of new housing areas. The Special Housing Committee recommended that a survey of all the open spaces in the city should be made and such as are necessary and suitable for housing acquired by the Corporation.[3]

The ownership by private persons of such a large number of slum sites presented the municipal authorities with a very difficult problem for many years. In many cases the landlord owned the site only and the superstructures were the property of the tenants. In the period prior to the appointment of the Special Housing Committee in 1933, the Corporation made somewhat sporadic efforts to compel landlords to improve the lay-out of these slum sites. It was sometimes argued that the Corporation could not be held responsible for the reconstruction of private property. Under the Madras City Municipal Act (1919) the municipality was vested with powers to enforce such improvement of private property by the owners as was necessary in the interests of public health. When any attempt was made to invoke these powers the landlord could reply by evicting the tenants or threatening to do so. In most cases the mere threat was sufficient to produce a deadlock, for the Corporation, with no legal power to prevent such an eviction, usually took fright at the prospect of a colony of slum-dwellers being thrown on its hands (or on its streets) and withdrew pressure on the

[1] *Report of the City High Mortality Committee*, 1927, part I, p. 19.
[2] *Report of the Special Housing Committee, Corporation of Madras*, 1934, pp. 38ff.
[3] ibid., p. 26.

landlord. This position of stalemate prevented for many years the intervention of the Corporation in compelling the improvement of privately owned slum sites.

Though this legal limitation provided a convenient excuse for inaction with regard to the whole question of housing, it is fairly obvious that no adequate solution to the problem would be provided by merely forcing private landlords to improve their sites. In many cases this would not touch the question of the dwellings at all owing to the arrangements under which the sites are let. And to talk of compelling the poverty-stricken Adi-Dravida owner of the superstructure to spend money on the improvement of his miserable thatch hut in order that it may conform to municipal housing standards is to talk nonsense.

A realistic approach to a solution of the Madras slum problem seems to demand a recognition of the necessity for the public ownership of the sites which require reconstruction. To reconstruct the sites, or force private owners to do so, and leave the occupants to their own devices in the construction of dwellings will provide no ultimate solution. This type of arrangement has been tried under the most favourable circumstances in connection with the Corporation Plinth schemes described in the preceding chapter. There the tenants were provided not only with well-laid sites, but with concrete bases for their houses. While this is obviously better than the old chaotic arrangements it was not regarded as a satisfactory solution by the Special Housing Committee. Their comments on the subject are relevant and interesting in this connection :

> The Committee has considered the question of the construction of plinths and comes to the following conclusions:
>
> (1) That the superstructures on the plinths are temporary and require renewal every year.
>
> (2) That the superstructures are very inflammable and, in case of fire, the whole area is wiped out.
>
> (3) That there is a serious loss to the Corporation of paying compensation when such fires occur.
>
> (4) That it is not possible to keep thatched huts as clean as properly constructed dwellings.
>
> The Committee is, therefore, definitely opposed to the construction of plinths unless the construction of houses is an impossibility.[1]

[1] *Report of the Special Housing Committee, Corporation of Madras*, 1934, p. 12.

A strange omission in the *Report of the Special Committee* is any explicit reference to this problem of privately-owned slum sites. But public ownership was quite clearly anticipated and is implicit in all the recommendations relating to rehousing.

So long as the slum areas in Madras are so largely owned by private individuals who are permitted to rent sites to the slum-dweller, who in turn erects his own flimsy and ramshackle dwelling-place, it will be impossible to find a satisfactory solution to the slum problem.

2. The Structure or Dwelling

The most typical form of dwelling-place among the poorer classes in Madras city is the mud and thatch hut. These huts vary greatly in size and in comfort and cleanliness. Some are almost incredibly low and squalid—mere hovels. Others are equal in size and in amenity to many 'pukka'[1] houses. A well-planned and properly constructed mud and thatch house can be both pleasant to look at and comfortable to live in. To very few of the mud and thatch huts in Madras city does this apply, however. Most of them are of the squalid and airless variety and are situated on filthy and insanitary sites—ill-planned and ill-kept.

The 'cheries' are characterised by certain very definite features. The first of these is the hopeless state of the dwelling. The huts, which are generally made of mud and thatch or of old kerosene tins, are low hovels, without any aperture for light or air except a doorway so small that one has to stoop to enter. The average size is 8 feet by 9 feet, though many are smaller. In some cheries the huts are built back to back, or are separated only by the narrowest alleys, with the result that there is overcrowding of the very worst kind. In most cases the houses are so flimsy that they afford no effective shelter either in the monsoon or in the hot weather.[2]

Reference has already been made to the efforts which have been directed towards rehousing by the Corporation. A number of the worst slums have been reconstructed at considerable public expense. But, as was pointed out, only the fringe of the problem has been touched. The methods by which this reconstruction has been done are open to serious criticism. Comment has already been made as to the lack

[1] 'pukka' = permanent, solidly built.

[2] *A General Report on the Conditions of the Slums of Madras*, Madras *Sanitary Welfare League*, 1933, pp. 4 and 5.

of uniformity in policy and method. The plinth system has been condemned by the Special Housing Committee. The housing schemes have been severely criticised by the same committee principally on the ground of expense and the fact that they have not benefited the poorest classes for whom they were intended. 'The Committee observes that none of the schemes is a paying or even an economic proposition, nor can it be said that these schemes are benefiting the poorest for whom they are intended. There is also another defect that the houses are not kept as clean and neat as they should be.'[1]

The cost of some of these Corporation schemes seems to have been quite incommensurate with the results achieved. In some cases the cost per house was as much as four times greater than the cost of others. (See chapter vii, p. 98.) In the least costly scheme the houses were estimated to cost Rs. 363 each. In the Bogipalayam scheme they cost Rs. 1,296 each.

The Special Housing Committee scrutinized the whole question of costs with some care and reached the conclusion that a house for slum-dwellers containing a room 12 ft. by 10 ft., a kitchen and a small verandah, should not cost more than Rs. 350, and approved a plan embodying these requirements. The Committee's suggestion was that houses of this type should be built in blocks with a common water supply, common latrines and common bathing places for a group of houses, this uniform method to be applied universally throughout the slum areas of the city.

For this purpose a detailed list of plans, estimates and other statistics was compiled by the works department of the Corporation, and a definite programme for a ten-year plan of slum-clearance and rehousing worked out. The estimated cost of the complete reconstruction of the slum areas of Madras city under this scheme was Rs. 1,04,03,000, and the Committee proposed that the money should be raised by the simple expedient of inviting the Government of Madras to provide it 'by way of half-grant and half-loan in ten equal yearly instalments', the loans to be granted at 4 per cent. interest per annum and repayable in 40 years.

> On such a basis the amount for interest and sinking fund charges on the loan of 50 lakhs every year will be Rs. 2,52,625, which amount has to be found from the general revenues of

[1] *Report of the Special Housing Committee, Corporation of Madras*, 1934, p. 12.

the Corporation either by way of increase in the present rate of property tax or by the creation of a new housing scheme tax or some other special tax.[1]

The Committee did not anticipate any considerable yield by way of profit from the reconstructed housing areas. It was estimated that a rent of Re. 1-8 or Rs. 2 per dwelling per mensem might be anticipated. 'Such rent . . . will have to be set apart for keeping the slums in order and improving them whenever necessary.'[2]

It was finally recommended that 'for the management and control of the housing schemes of the Corporation' an Improvement Trust should be constituted.[3] This Trust was to be charged with the following special duties:

(1) Occupation of the slums by the poorest.
(2) The proper and regular collection of rents.
(3) Elimination of slum mentality through the co-operation of social agencies, and by making conditions that the tenements must be kept clean or the occupants will be evicted.
(4) Avoidance of overcrowding, committing of nuisance, [*id est*—suppression of committing of nuisance], and observance of sanitary and conservancy rules.[4]

This, in bare outline, and mainly in the words of the Special Committee's Report, is the scheme proposed by that Committee for the solution of the slum problem of Madras, and subsequently adopted as the policy of the Corporation of Madras.

The scheme is to be welcomed as the first really serious attempt to face the slum problem of the city—though it is as yet only a theoretical attempt. It possesses the merit of being comprehensive and it is certainly courageous. It tries to see the problem whole, and to find a solution which in a definite period will abolish the slums of the city. Its acceptance marks a revolution in the thought and outlook of the municipal council.

There are points of detail in the proposals which may be questioned. The idea of a cheap house of uniform pattern may become a menace, if an uninspired and unimaginative Trust is let loose on the task of mass production. The city

[1] *Report of the Special Housing Committee, Corporation of Madras*, 1934, p. 14.
[2] ibid., p. 14.
[3] ibid., p. 14. Under Section 45 of the Madras Town-Planning Act.
[4] ibid., p. 15.

may be swamped with little houses that are not only cheap but nasty; and though almost anything would be an improvement on present conditions, if large sums of money are to be spent, the Trust which is to have the responsibility of spending them should not (as is suggested in the proposals) be the mere agent of a wooden and predetermined programme to be operated by rule of thumb. It should be a body which commands public confidence, be provided with resources sufficient to enable it to secure the best expert advice and be given the right to modify and adapt details of policy where such adaptation appears to be in the public interest.

Type of dwelling

Before an arbitrary decision as to the type of house to be built in rehousing areas is reached there are two things which need to be done. The first is the clear definition by experts of the minimum standards in regard to floor and cubic space, ventilation etc. necessary in a healthy dwelling, and when such standards have been defined they should be incorporated by the Municipal Council in a set of carefully drafted building by-laws, applicable to both private and public housing schemes. The second need is for further experimental work in the construction of cheap but adequate working-class dwellings. Some compromise between the more substantial but expensive 'pukka' erection and the less permanent but cheaper 'kutcha' construction should be possible. If a satisfactory compromise of this kind could be achieved, the financial implications of the whole housing task would be much less formidable. In this connection a commendable experiment has already been made by the Madras Sanitary Welfare League, with the co-operation of the Madras Rotary Club, in an effort to find an economic housing scheme for the very poor. Plans and specifications for a model hut were designed by a qualified engineer, and an experimental building consisting of two dwellings was erected on a site provided by the Corporation on Lloyd's Road, Madras. The building was of mud and thatch.[1] But the

[1] For this account of the construction of the model dwelling, the writer is largely indebted to some notes provided by Mr. H. Guy Jackson, Executive Engineer, Public Works Department of the Government of Madras, who was responsible for the planning and construction of these dwellings.

walls were improved by being built by the *pisé* method which ensured that they were vertical and smooth, and were plastered on the outside face with cement mortar (1 part cement to 5 parts sand), as a protection against weathering. At all points of weakness such as the door-step, edge of pial, top of walls, etc., cement concrete was placed in the mould for the *pisé* work along with the mud. All the walls were finally washed with three coats of whitewash. Special purpose-made reinforced concrete bathing squares, door-frames, sinks and jarley-work window grills were made and set up in position as the mud work progressed. The filling in of the basement was with sea-sand with 3 inches of gravel on the top. The floor was finished with cowdung. The foundations were dug down one foot below ground level and built of the same *pisé* work as the superstructure. The plastering also reached down to the bottom of the foundation trench. The engineer responsible for the construction estimated that the walls would have a minimum life of 30 years. 'Carefully protected mud houses are known which are still standing after a life of 60 years.'

The roof was of country thatch. The walls on which it rested had 4 inches of cement concrete on top of them. This served three purposes. Roof-leaks were prevented from getting down into the centre of the walls and ruining them. The concrete was a useful precaution against the ravages of white ants. And by pushing wires through the walls immediately below the concrete and looping them up over the bamboo roof-rafters and wall-plate, the concrete was made to serve as an anchor and the danger of the roof blowing off in a violent storm was thus lessened.

On the basis of this type of construction the financial implications of a scheme for a housing settlement of 112 dwellings was worked out as follows:[1]

Number of dwellings upon which the calculations are based: 112.
Gross area per dwelling including share of roads etc. (2 dwellings per hut): 0·54 grounds = 2·5 cents.
Net area per dwelling: 0·24 grounds = 1·32 cents.
Population: 560.
Houses per tap: 12.
Persons per latrine seat: 20.

[1] See *Report of the Madras Sanitary Welfare League for* 1932-3, p. 5.

Cost of one dwelling: Rs. 240.

Total for 112 dwellings	...	Rs. 26,880
Surface and sullage drains	...	,, 5,000
Latrine	...	,, 3,360*
Water	...	,, 960*
Lights (street) ...	...	,, 3,600*
Roads and lanes ...	...	,, 1,533
Total cost of scheme	...	Rs. 41,333

Note.—The items starred above are by the Municipal Act of 1919 to be supplied free by the Corporation, though they are included for purposes of these calculations. Their value is about equal to that of the land required for the scheme, the cost of which has, however, been omitted.

Gross cost of one dwelling, excluding the cost of land = Rs. 359.

Economic monthly rent at 6 per cent. on Rs. 359 = Re. 1·845.

Amortization on the superstructure alone in 18 years costs monthly: Re. ·625.

Total rent: Rs. 2·470 or say Rs. 2-8 per month.

After 18 years the rent drops to Re. 0-11-0.

The explanation of this last statement is that it was suggested that a permanent ground rent of Re. 0-11 should be charged on the sites in order to give the owner some control over the tenants. The superstructure, however, was to be let at a rent which made possible the hire-purchase of the dwelling over a period of 18 years; i.e. the debt was to be amortized in that period. The idea of this was to give the tenant a motive for safeguarding the property, and to enlist his co-operation in its upkeep.

An experimental hut (2 dwellings) was erected in 1933 by means of a grant from the Madras Rotary Club, supplemented by public subscriptions. It cannot be claimed that the experiment realized all the hopes of its supporters. Misfortune, in the shape of a violent monsoon storm which washed away a good deal of the half-finished work, raised the costs above the estimated figure. When the houses were completed the tenants were not chosen with as much care as they might have been, and the first occupants of the houses being Mussalmans, insisted on providing greater seclusion for their women folk than the original plan permitted and proceeded to obstruct the through passage of air and to disfigure

the appearance of the building by additional erections of their own.

Altogether the property gave a good deal of anxiety to those responsible for its administration. But its significance and justification does not depend upon these accidental and adventitious factors. The value of the experiment, viewed as an experiment, remains. The dwellings were not 'model' in the sense of being ideal. But they did indicate in a practical manner the possibility of cheapening building costs in slum rehousing. The thatched roof is perhaps the weakest part of the whole scheme on the structural side. Such roofs require constant renewal and are ultimately uneconomic and they are also a source of danger because of their inflammability. But the experiment, despite its weaknesses, does point a way to profitable research which should be more fully explored before extensive building operations are initiated.

There are other housing experiments in other parts of India, e.g. at the Empress Mills, Nagpur, in Secunderabad, and in Trichinopoly (by the South Indian Railway) from which much might be learned.

Economic Rents

The question of the type of house and the cost of its construction must be considered in relation to the economic conditions of the people to be housed. In a later chapter standards of living will be considered in detail. At this stage, however, it is relevant to ask to what extent economic rents may be expected from the present slum-dwellers. It is possible only to give a very general answer to that question. It must first be determined what an economic rent is, and that again must necessarily be a very general estimate, hedged around by numerous qualifications. Assuming that a suitable dwelling can be erected at a cost of Rs. 350, the cost of land and the outlay on upkeep and repairs are certain to be variable. But put the average cost of land per house at the fairly generous figure of Rs. 100. The total capital outlay on each dwelling would then be Rs. 450, assuming that the Corporation would find the charges for streets, drains, latrines, water, lights etc. from other sources.

The Special Housing Committee estimated the potential income from rents to be from Re. 1-8 to Rs. 2 per dwelling per mensem.[1] On a capital cost of Rs. 450, a monthly rent

[1] *Report of the Special Housing Committee, Corporation of Madras*, 1934, p. 14.

of Re. 1-8 would represent a return of 4 per cent. and a monthly rent of Rs. 2 a return of approximately 5¼ to 5½ per cent. A return of 4 per cent. would leave no margin whatever for upkeep (if interest charges on the borrowed capital were 4 per cent.), and no provision for sinking fund charges. A return of 5¼ per cent. would leave a narrow margin for upkeep which with judicious management might be sufficient. But again, no sinking fund charges could be found from income.

We shall return later to the question of the financial implications of slum rehousing, but meanwhile it is important to enquire as to the capacity of the slum dweller for whom it is proposed to build houses to pay an economic rent.

To form a reliable judgment on the question, a complete economic survey would be necessary. Such a survey has not been made and the figure of the Special Housing Committee (see p. 118) is probably more of a guess than a scientific estimate. But it is not a wild guess, for many of the people at present living in the slums are known to pay rents of Re. 1-8 and Rs. 2 per mensem. Many pay less and some pay more, but since the rents paid by these people are usually for the ground alone and not for the dwelling, they would probably be able to pay a little more for house rent.

In 1932 an organization[1] with which the writer was closely associated undertook a survey in a typical slum area in Madras. No detailed economic data were collected, but figures of the average income per family in each hutting ground surveyed were calculated on the basis of information received from the residents. Information was also elicited as to the ground rents which were being paid by each hut owner (in this area the occupants were the owners of the superstructures).

The people were typical of the poorest classes in Madras. They belonged mainly to the Depressed Classes. The great majority of them were quite illiterate. Their homes were of mud and thatch and situated on hutting grounds characteristically insanitary and unhealthy. Their occupations varied a good deal, but were typical of the people of their class—coolies, rickshaw-pullers, Corporation servants, jutka-drivers, cow-dung cake-makers, fuel-cutters, etc.

The table on page 124 sets out those results of the enquiry which are relevant to the point under discussion—the number of huts and families in each 'cheri', the average income

[1] The Triplicane Sociological Brotherhood.

per family, the average number of persons per family and the ground rent paid in each 'cheri'.

Name of Cheri[1]	No. of huts	Average monthly income per family	Average No. of persons per family	Ground Rent per month
		RS A P		
1. Thayumanavar Thottam ...	9	22 0 0	5/6	Re. 1 to Re 1/4.
2. Gorinilam ...	23	16 8 0	3/4	8 As. to 11 As.
3. Thulukkanam Tope Cheri ...	11	21 0 0	4	8 As. to 12 As.
4. Komuttichatram ...	40	17 12 0	3/4	8 As. to Re. 1/8.
5. Gramat Ali Land ...	20	19 0 0	4/5	12 As. to Re. 1/8.
6. Lalathotam ...	22	16 12 0	4	Re. 1 to Re. 1/4.
7. Krishnampet Sudukattu Cheri ..	34	17 12 0	4	none[2]
8. Pulumettu Cheri ...	21	17 12 0	4	none[3]
9. Labour Department Land ...	13	24 0 0	4	none[4]
10. Valayar Kuppam ...	97	8 0 0	4	none[5]

It can be seen that in this typical cross-section of Madras slum life the average family income varies a good deal. The average income per family for the whole group of huts works out at approximately 18 rupees per mensem. In the case of No. 10 (Valayar Kuppam) there may be reason to suspect the accuracy of the information given. This was a fishing colony and as a general rule fishermen on the Madras coast can earn a much larger monthly income than Rs. 8. There was a fairly high percentage of unemployment in this 'cheri' at the time of the enquiry, but not enough to account for the very low average income figures returned. The explanation probably lies in the fact that the natural suspicion of the enquiry, which was met with everywhere during its prosecution, was accentuated in the case of Valayar Kuppam by the fact that the people were under notice to vacate the site. It is possible that they imagined that if they could make as poor a show as possible to the investigators they might succeed in averting the eviction.

[1] These 'cheries' are all situated in south-east Madras in a compact area lying between Edward Elliott's Road, Wallajah Road, the Triplicane High Road and the South Beach Road.

[2] Pending a dispute about ownership of the land—no ground rent was being paid here!

[3] This group of huts was removed shortly after the enquiry.

[4] Permitted to occupy site rent free by Labour Department of Government.

[5] These people were under orders of eviction at the time of the enquiry.

The monthly average income without Valayar Kuppam works out at approximately Rs. 19. In 6 out of the 10 'cheries' ground rent ranging from 8 annas to Re. 1-8 was being paid; and in each of the remaining four 'cheries' in which no ground rent was being paid at the time of the enquiry, there were special circumstances to account for the fact. But the payment or non-payment of rent had no relation to the economic conditions of the people.

From families whose income is only Rs. 19 per month it would be quite impossible to extort an economic rent for houses such as have been suggested by the Special Housing Committee. It is to be remembered, however, that this is an *average* figure and moreover, a figure reached by the investigation of some of the very poorest communities in the city. There are perhaps many occupants of slum areas whose economic position would enable them to pay an economic rent. To suggest even the most general estimate of their numbers would be mere guesswork. But when any rehousing scheme is undertaken careful enquiry into the economic conditions of the tenants of the new houses should be made before any arbitrary rates for rent are fixed or applied. There are obvious difficulties involved in any attempt to apply the principle 'from each according to his ability'; and there is also considerable possibility of evasion and inequitable treatment. It is to be remembered, however, that this principle is at present in operation in connection with the rehousing schemes already completed by the Corporation (compare rents and costs in table in chapter vii), and it cannot, therefore, be dismissed as quite impracticable. Its successful administration would, however, require very great care; and variation in the rents of similar houses in the same housing area would have to be avoided as far as possible.

3. Habits of the People

The problem of the slums cannot be dealt with in terms of bricks and mortar, though the necessity for more and better houses is obvious. The factor of human behaviour must everywhere be taken into account, for the problem of housing in Madras is as much a problem of the 'slum mind' as of the slum dwelling. The habitually anti-social conduct of large sections of the community in matters of sanitation and hygiene may create new housing problems as quickly as the builders solve old ones. This is not, however, an argument against the urgent necessity for rebuilding operations,

but merely a reminder that rebuilding is not enough. It is in fact the conviction of the writer that a great deal of the carelessness in matters of cleanliness and sanitation amongst Madras slum-dwellers would be checked by the provision of more permanent and attractive homes.

The average migrant from a rural area, who settles in an Indian city often continues to regard as his home the village from which he has come. The most fundamental difference between the Indian urban labouring classes and the corresponding classes in the West is that the latter are drawn mainly from those who have been brought up in urban surroundings, while Indian urban labourers are nearly all migrants. The migration in India from rural areas to towns and factories is, as a rule, not a permanent exodus. In the thought of those who undertake it, it is frequently regarded as a temporary transfer, and there is constant interchange between the city and the village. This statement applies to Indian industrial labour in general; but it is important to note that it is less applicable to Madras than to other industrial centres (e.g. Bombay). The cotton mill workers in Madras have almost ceased to be migratory and there are large sections of the labouring class community which form part of the permanent urban population. This Madras situation is to be explained mainly by the fact that the migrants are drawn largely from the depressed classes whose hold upon the land has always been slight or precarious and for whom the incentive to return to the village is distinctly weaker than in the case of land-owning communities. The Madrasi labourer who comes to the city shows a strong tendency to settle there permanently. But, and this point is of great importance, whether his residence in the city be in fact temporary or permanent, a sense of impermanence colours his outlook and his behaviour. He is a migrant and a stranger in a strange place. He often camps on the streets or on a patch of open ground for prolonged periods. If he secures a place in a 'cheri', he may, and often does, find that the hold of the tenants upon the site is very precarious and that the threat of eviction hangs over them. The feeling that here he has 'no continuing city' induces an attitude of carelessness and comparative indifference to the question of possessing a 'home' which shall provide a measure of comfort. Makeshift arrangements often suffice. A ramshackle hut of mud and thatch or an erection of flattened kerosene tins, fearfully and wonderfully made, seems good enough for a man who feels that he has no

security, and whose heart is really in some village a hundred miles away. Not infrequently, however, he remains in the city all his life—pathetically content with his 'temporary' home, hardened in a perpetual sense of impermanence and unambitious to improve his lot.

Seldom, if ever, does one find amongst the slum-dwellers of Madras that house pride which so often dignifies the mean streets of western cities. And the reason is not far to seek. Those who rail at the Indian slum-dweller for his dirtiness, his lethargy, his apparent lack of a healthy desire for better conditions, need to be reminded that if a city treats men as pariahs and outcastes and gives them little chance of living in decent conditions of permanence and little recognition as useful citizens, it cannot expect them to share a lofty sense of civic pride. The provision of adequate and decent housing must be the first step towards an enlightened civic and sanitary conscience amongst the poorer classes. But structural improvements must be accompanied by an intelligent and sustained programme of education and health propaganda.

'No observant person', wrote the authors of the City High Mortality Committee's report,[1] 'can fail to notice the entire lack of co-operation between the individual citizen and the Public Health Department of the city. In all civilized countries, the development of a civic and sanitary conscience has been the primary force which has compelled municipal bodies and local boards to make progress in communal health, but until that conscience is more evident in Madras, communal hygiene will continue to be the sport of political parties, and improvement will not be realized. We would recommend that a definite scheme of health propaganda be carried out, week by week and month by month by all officers and Sanitary Inspectors of the Public Health Department of the city. The teaching of hygiene in schools and colleges is also most desirable, and we suggest that some use be made of the Medical Inspectors of Schools in this connection. All health propaganda work should be actively supported by municipal councillors in their respective divisions, and, in order to develop a healthy competitive spirit, weekly and monthly divisional mortality and sickness returns should be presented at all municipal meetings and distributed broadcast all over the city. These returns should appear in the local press and should also be exhibited at cinema performances. The average citizen of Madras takes little or no interest in the health of his fellow-citizens. No

[1] 1927, part I, p. 26.

possible method of changing his outlook in this respect should be neglected.

Some of these suggestions have been put into practice in recent years, and all of them are important in relation to general health propaganda. But so far as the slums are concerned, the release of a barrage of propaganda from municipal headquarters is not likely to have any measurable effect upon the problem. The task of civic education amongst the poorer classes will demand a high degree of imagination, persistence and sustained service not only on the part of the paid servants of the city, but also by the more fortunate and enlightened members of the community.

If new housing schemes for slum-dwellers are undertaken, they must be accompanied by means of adult education in the new settlements which are more thorough and efficient than any methods of propaganda hitherto pursued in Madras. There can be little hope of improved sanitary conditions apart from the development of means of education which are based upon close contact with the people and sympathetic understanding of their outlook and their needs.

Two suggestions towards the achievement of this end may be made :

(1) The adoption of a method of house management in each of the new housing areas similar in method and intention to the Octavia Hill system of house property management. The Octavia Hill method, which has proved itself effective in many western cities where the problem of the anti-social tenant has been acute, involves the appointment of women house-property managers who establish personal contact with the tenants and aim at a high and efficient standard of management. Repairs are promptly attended to, references carefully taken up, cleaning sedulously supervised, overcrowding prohibited, ready monthly payments enforced and tenants so chosen and sorted as to be helpful to one another.

The application of this method of management, suitably adapted to Indian conditions, and operated by carefully chosen and well-trained managers, would almost certainly produce beneficial results in the proposed new housing areas. An experiment in slum rehousing in Bangalore, based on the idea of careful supervision and close contact by the appointed managers of the new property is described in the Administration Report of the Civil and Military Station, Bangalore, for the year 1921-2 and this description is attached to this Chapter as an Appendix.

It is to be noted that one of the recommendations of the Madras Special Housing Committee in 1934 was that a welfare superintendent should be appointed for each improved area.[1] The duties of such a superintendent might be defined in terms similar to those of House Property Managers under the Octavia Hill System.

(2) The second suggestion would perhaps be more difficult to put into practice, but it is none the less important and it has also secured the commendation and support of the Special Housing Committee. It is that in each new housing area a Community Centre should be established and the co-operation of voluntary social service organizations should be enlisted to carry on through such centres a programme of recreation and education in the broadest sense.

The success of these community centres would depend almost entirely upon the extent to which the educated and privileged classes in Madras city are prepared to give time and energy to a share in this work and to bring to it minds unfettered by prejudice and ready to establish close and understanding contact with the common people. This is a task which demands real and sustained sacrifice, but the wrongs of the past are not to be cheaply undone and the writer is convinced that it is only by such sacrifice on the part of a growing number of the more privileged classes that an ultimate solution will be found for the problem of the slums in Madras city.

The Settlement Movement in the West brought a new sense of realism into social service and sent the youth of the universities to live in the slums of English cities. A movement similar in spirit, though perhaps different in method, is urgently needed in India. The slum community centre in Madras might be developed as a means far more effective than anything yet devised to bring new standards of self-respect and of citizenship to the thousands of slum-dwellers in the city.

It is not suggested that ordinary methods of health propaganda should be displaced by these schemes. The old methods must continue. But such propaganda alone is quite inadequate to deal with the very real problem of the 'slum mind'—a problem so widespread and acute in Madras that it might well drive the propagandist to cynical despair. It is claimed that the suggestions here made point to ways in which the problem may be attacked with the possibility of

[1] *Report of the Special Housing Committee*, 1934, p. 25.

more far-reaching results than could be achieved by the older methods of education.

Appendix to Chapter VIII

Extract from Administration Report, C. & M. Station, Bangalore, 1921-2, describing Knoxpet Settlement in Bangalore

The Commission regrets that it cannot look to private enterprise to supply new houses for the lowest class. A great deal of money came into the station as a result of the presence of a large war garrison, but it is being invested in large bungalow properties or in the improvement of large bazaar houses. Nowhere are houses being provided for Pariahs; for the simple reason that it does not pay. In the interest therefore not only of the Pariahs themselves but also of the rest of the population (not least the military portion of it), which suffers from the existence of such disease-breeding areas, the Commission is compelled itself to undertake the work of providing suitable housing.

The Commission now proposes to deal with the problem of housing Pariahs by the construction of settlements in various parts of the station, at the same time demolishing insanitary areas and utilising cleared areas as the needs of good town planning dictate. The sites of the new settlements have been carefully selected with due consideration to accessibility from working centres and to the class of extension likely to be erected later in the various areas. The settlements to be built on these sites will follow the plan recently adopted for Knoxpet. In the early part of the present year, with a view to demonstrating what was proposed on a wider scale, the Commission decided to commence at once the rebuilding of Knoxpet. The first block of houses is now finished and occupied. The first principle adopted is that the houses now built must be such that 30 years hence they will still be considered up to a proper social and sanitary standard. For this reason the houses may for the present be considered too good for the class that will occupy them. But the Commission feels most strongly that it is necessary to make a definite and considerable advance in standard if Pariahs are to learn self-respect and similar lessons of hygiene. The second principle adopted is that the dull uniformity of barracks must be avoided. This mistake has been made with earlier schemes, but the Commission feels that such uniformity is a hindrance to social elevation. The third principle is that the houses must be so planned that, if the economic status of Pariahs improves (and it appears likely that it will), the houses may be combined into larger units without expensive structural alteration. The houses have stone roofs;

not only are they rat-proof but they are so constructed as to reduce the repairs to an absolute minimum. They have been examined on the ground by the best civil and military sanitary experts in Bangalore and as each block is completed it will be again examined in the light of experience and improvements incorporated in the new blocks. Experiments are being made with a simple water closet in each house; whether this is successful or not, each house will be given a sullage water connection to a piped sewer, and public latrines will be on the water-carriage system, unfiltered water being easily pumped and the main sewer of the station being close by.

The proposed layout is based on a quadrangular plan which provides open spaces measuring 220 ft. by 120 ft. The intention of the Commission is that each settlement shall be complete in itself. The Knoxpet settlement will eventually comprise 108 double and 310 single houses with a proper complement of schools, temples, and churches, a market, and a creche. Provision will be made for playgrounds and for the sanitary accommodation, separate from houses, of goats and cows. It is proposed for the present to charge rent on a basis of 3 per cent. on capital outlay including establishment. This will mean that people now paying 8 annas or one rupee will be called on to pay a minimum of two rupees; this immediate increase in rent is a challenge to the Pariahs to adopt a better standard of living, and it cannot at present be exceeded without hardship. It is calculated that from the rent of these settlements the schools and other institutions can be maintained on a high level of efficiency; and it is the declared policy of the Commission that the proceeds of the settlements shall be funded and devoted entirely to the needs of the settlements or to similar work in other parts of the station. The rents will not go into general funds.

It is realized that the management of municipal houses is often the most difficult part of a scheme. The prevention of overcrowding, the maintenance of sanitary standards, the selection of tenants, all present daily problems with which the ordinary executive of the Commission could not be expected to deal. It is proposed to appoint a retired Indian officer of such a corps as the Sappers and Miners, men accustomed to deal with this class and enforce discipline, as manager of each settlement, and to build him a good house conveniently situated. His work would be supervised by an officer or Committee of the Commission.

The possibility of permitting purchase of houses by tenants on the instalment plan has not been lost sight of, but it is thought unsafe for the present to allow such an arrangement lest the property change hands and the evils of private ownership creep in before conditions exist under which they could be counteracted.

CHAPTER IX

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM

Overcrowding

The second major problem which has to be faced in any comprehensive attempt to deal with the question of housing in Madras is the elimination of overcrowding. Though this evil is not unknown in the slums, where large families frequently sleep together in one-roomed huts, it presents itself in its most menacing form in those areas where medium-sized houses, built in closely-packed, narrow streets, predominate. The slum-dweller, despite the cramped insufficiency of his hut, has this advantage over many of his fellow citizens—he normally uses his hut only for sleeping purposes, and spends most of his time in the open air.

For many years the problem of overcrowding in so-called middle-class areas in Madras has been known to be acute. The City High Mortality Committee[1] attributed the high and increasing mortality from respiratory diseases mainly to the evil of overcrowding.

> ' During our inspections ', they wrote, ' we have seen as many as five and six families living in one house, and five to eight persons living in each room. We are convinced that overcrowding exists to an alarming extent and that the evil conditions arising from overcrowding are largely responsible for much of the sickness and mortality arising from respiratory diseases in general and tuberculosis in particular, and, as we have already stated, for the diseases associated with the consequent lack of sanitation. Enquiry has shown that pneumonia is a very common disease throughout the whole year, and many of the deaths among young children must be due to this and other respiratory affections caused by the lack of fresh air and the generally insanitary conditions always associated with overcrowding.'[2]

In 1934 the total death-rate for the city was 34·2 per 1,000 of the estimated population.[3] In the same year the death-rate from respiratory diseases was 8·4 per 1,000, these diseases being responsible for a far higher percentage of deaths than any of the other principal diseases current in the city, as the following table shows.

[1] *Report*, 1927, part I, pp. 22-3. [2] *Report*, 1927, part I, p. 23.
[3] *Annual Report of the Health Department, Corporation of Madras*, 1934.

Deaths from Principal Diseases, Madras City, 1934[1]

	No.	*Rate per 1,000 of Estimated Population*
Cholera	166	0·24
Diarrhoea and dysentery ...	2,008	2·9
Smallpox	131	0·19
Measles	7	0·01
Malaria	193	0·28
Enteric fever	145	0·2
Phthisis	971	1·4
Respiratory diseases ...	5,783	8·4

During recent years there has been an alarming increase in deaths from this respiratory group, as is shown by the following figures, which give the total number of deaths from general respiratory diseases for the years 1913 to 1933.[3] Over this whole period of 20 years the gross deaths and the death

Year	Tuberculosis		Respiratory Diseases	
	No. of deaths	Death-rate per 1000	No. of deaths	Death-rate per 1000
1913	481	0·9	2219	4·2
1914	738	1·4	3024	5·8
1915	759	1·5	2303	4 4
1916	876	1·7	2851	5 5
1917	1067	2·1	3293	6·4
1918	1488	2·9	5518	10·6
1919	1013	2·0	2841	5·4
1920	997	1·9	3431	8 5
1921	957	1·8	3510	6·7
1922	1088	2·1	3823	7·3
1923	1268	2·4	3342	6 3
1924	1468	2·8	4[illegible]30	7·8
1925	1604	3·0	48[illegible]2[2]	9·1
1926	1534[2]	2·9	4932[2]	9·3
1927	1781	3·3	50[illegible]5	9·5
1928	1812	3·4	6879	13 0
1929	1371	2·6	5324	10·1
1930	1075	2·0	5256	9·9
1931	1020	1·6	5743	8·9
1932	917	1·4	5509	8·5
1933	1011	1·6	5967	9·2

[1] *Annual Report of the Health Department, Corporation of Madras*, 1934.

[2] There are discrepancies between these figures and those printed in the *Annual Report of the Health Department of the Corporation* for 1934.

[3] *Report of the Special Housing Committee, Corporation of Madras*, 1934, p. 31.

rate have approximately doubled both in the case of tuberculosis and of General Respiratory diseases.

The City High Mortality Committee prepared a graph to illustrate the monthly incidence of the combined group—respiratory diseases plus tubercle, in order to demonstrate that despite climatic changes 'the main causal factors'[1] in this group of diseases 'are at work throughout the whole year'.[2]

The graph was based on the figures for the years 1910 to 1926, excluding 1918 and 1919, the 'influenza' years.

The Committee's comments on the graph are as follows:

> The conditions in Madras are admittedly severe all through the year, but the graph shows once more that the hot weather months are the healthiest and that the death-rate increases rapidly in the months immediately following the [north-east[3]] monsoon. Dampness of soil and unfavourable climatic conditions, seem therefore to have an important influence on the incidence of this group. At the same time, even in May and June, the numbers of deaths from these diseases remain very high, the maximum in December being only about 13 per cent. higher than the maximum in June.[4]

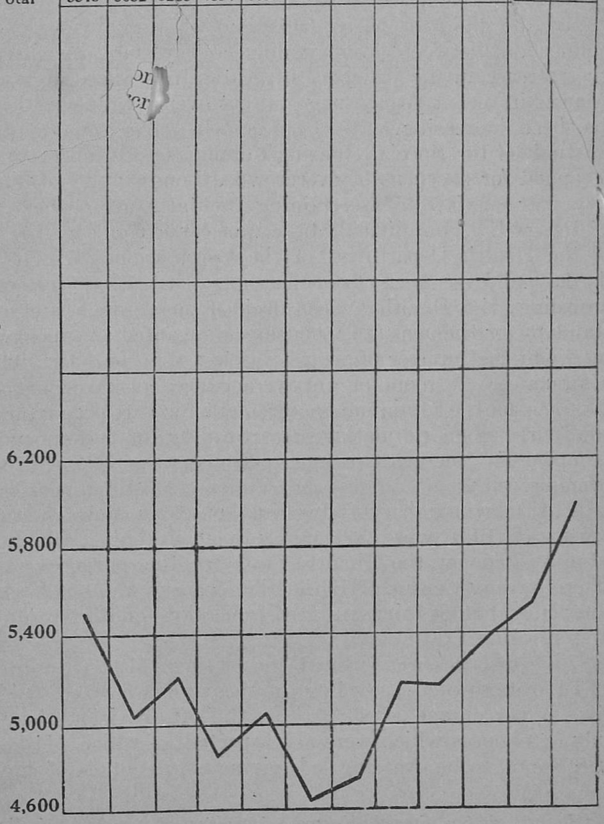
The conclusion of the Committee was that the main causes are not climatic, the inference being that the overcrowded conditions in the city are primarily responsible for the high death-rates from this group of diseases. 'There seems to be a close connection between overcrowding and the incidence of respiratory affections'.[5] It was further found that when the death-rates per 1,000 of the population were worked out for each division of the city 'these—although universally high—show important differences'.[6]

All the divisions in Georgetown were well above the mean rate for the city, and other areas[7] such as Vepery, Chintadripet and Chepauk and Triplicane were also above the average.[8] 'These areas are almost identical with those which show high tuberculosis rates and include nearly all the overcrowded parts of the city.'[9]

[1] *Report of the City High Mortality Committee*, 1927, part I, p. 13.
[2] ibid., p. 13.
[3] The Report referred to the 'North-west' monsoon, which is obviously a misprint.
[4] *Report of the City High Mortality Committee*, 1927, part I, p. 13.
[5] ibid., p. 13.
[6] ibid., p. 13.
[7] It is to be noted that the administrative divisions of the city have been changed since these calculations were made.
[8] *Report of the City High Mortality Committee*, 1927, part I, p. 13.
[9] ibid., p. 13.

Respiratory diseases plus Tubercle for the period 1910 to 1926 (excluding 1918 and 1919)

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Respiratory diseases	4069	3726	3947	3590	3832	3548	3552	3966	3938	4147	4240	4547
Tubercle	1446	1306	1288	1264	1227	1103	1190	1220	1246	1235	1285	1437
Total	5515	5032	5235	4854	5059	4651	4742	5186	5184	5382	5525	5984



The death-rate figures for 1934 from 'Tubercle' and from 'Respiratory Diseases' show, as did the earlier figures of the City High Mortality Committee, that the incidence of deaths from these diseases is little affected by climatic changes, the rates, on the whole, remaining fairly constant throughout the year. They show also that deaths per 1,000 of the population as a result of this group of diseases are highest chiefly in those areas where overcrowding is known to be common, and where many closely-packed houses, situated in narrow streets, are to be found.

In the light of these facts and of the obviously close connection between overcrowding and respiratory diseases, the increase in the incidence of deaths from these diseases in Madras in recent years, suggests that overcrowding in the city has been increasing.

In 1934 the Special Housing Committee of the Corporation arranged for a census of overcrowded houses and huts in the city with a view to ascertaining the facts as to the extent of the evil. This difficult task was carried out by the staff of the Health Department of the Corporation. As no standards had ever been fixed defining what constitutes overcrowding, the Health Officer decided on a rough and ready standard for the census. A house was regarded as overcrowded in which the number of rooms was less than half the number of inmates. A room of an average area of 80 sq. ft. was taken to be the minimum requirement for two persons.[1] For the purpose of estimating overcrowding in huts, any hut occupied by more than four persons was reckoned to be overcrowded.[2]

The total number of dwelling-houses in the city at the census of 1931 was 73,843. Only about half this number were visited by the Health Staff for the purposes of the Overcrowding Census of 1934. This census was not therefore complete, but it gives a fair indication of the extent of overcrowding.

25,584 houses were visited and of these 11,085 were found to be overcrowded according to the standard fixed.[3] 'This gives a percentage of 43·33. In the 5th Division there are only 580 houses which were all inspected, of which 244 houses were found to be overcrowded, giving a percentage of 42·07.'[4]

[1] *Report of the Special Housing Committee, Corporation of Madras*, 1934, p. 168.

[2] ibid., p. 168.

[3] ibid., p. 168.

[4] ibid., pp. 168-9.

12,036 huts were visited and of these 3,592 or 29·84 per cent. were found to be overcrowded according to the standard of 4 persons to one hut.[1]

The complete table of the results of this overcrowding census is as follows :

Division (1)	No. of houses inspected (2)	No. of huts inspected (3)	No of houses in which the average was above 2 persons per room (4)	No. of huts in which the average was above 4 persons per hut (5)	Per cent over-crowded houses (6)	Per cent over-crowded huts (7)
1	725	711	271	260	37·38	36·58
2	786	630	481	161	61·20	25·56
3	796	306	433	44	54·40	14·38
4	393	760	143	147	36·40	19·34
5	530	117	244	59	42·07	50·43
6	1,012	...	240	...	23·72	...
7	946	120	362	60	38·27	50·00
8	436	...	143	...	32·80	...
9	968	22	478	7	49·38	31·82
10	851	51	322	...	37·84	...
11	813	...	56	...	7·00	...
12	1,139	230	586	52	41·45	22·61
13	1,043	137	[illegible]	43	47·17	31·40
14	244	...	47	...	19·26	...
15	1,023	62	299	36	29·23	58·06
16	1,143	722	751	182	65·70	25·30
17	983	943	512	319	52·09	33·93
18	637	328	180	44	28·27	13·41
19	957	553	572	217	59·64	39·24
20	1,005	151	402	125	40·00	[illegible]
21	816	942	337	268	41·30	28·45
22	936	718	454	196	48·50	27·29
23	1,029	724	436	249	42·37	34·39
24	1,000	500	621	117	62·10	22·14
25	802	10	281	4	35·04	40·00
26	831	381	321	168	38·63	44·10
27	1,016	500	701	80	68·99	10·60
28	1,000	1,000	461	287	45·10	28·70
29	1,017	1,031	257	248	25·27	24·05
30	658	387	202	219	30·70	56·59
Total ...	25,584	12,036	11,085	3,592	43·33	29·84

Though these figures cover but half of the houses and huts of the city and can only be regarded as a process of extensive sampling, rather than a census, they are of very considerable value. They show that approximately 40 per

[1] *Report of the Special Housing Committee, Corporation of Madras*, 1934, p. 169.

cent. of the 'pukka' houses in the city of Madras are overcrowded. The extent of the overcrowding in each house visited was not recorded in detail, but the Health Officer wrote with reference to the census:

> From the details of the work done by the Sanitary Inspectors I find that we may require an increase of 40 per cent. of the number of overcrowded houses to relieve congestion. This means that 9,000 to 10,000 houses with an average of six rooms each to accommodate two families or 20,000 houses with an average of three rooms each to accommodate a single family (of six persons) have to be constructed.[1]

It can be seen from the figures given in the table that the overcrowding in 'pukka' houses is much more extensive and acute than in huts. As we have already dealt in detail with the problem of the hut and of slum rehousing we shall not revert to it here.

The Special Housing Committee of the Corporation gave special consideration to the facts disclosed by this overcrowding census, and, in order to meet the problem, recommended: 'the building of 10,000 houses not exceeding Rs. 2,000 each at a total cost of about Rs. 227 lakhs for relieving the overcrowding in middle-class houses. The total loan of Rs. 227 lakhs would be raised in six yearly instalments bearing interest at 4 per cent., and repayable within 40 years from the date of subscription. The income by way of rent based on nine months at Rs. 15 a month per house is Rs. 13,50,000 as against Rs. 11,56,917, the interest and sinking fund that will have to be paid for the total amount of the loan.'[2]

The Committee regarded this proposition as 'a commercially possible one', and recommended that 'the Government should be approached to give the necessary loan on these special terms'.

The Committee recommended as an alternative, in case the Council considered that this is too big a programme that 5,000 middle-class houses be built at a cost of 'something more than a crore of rupees'. They also recommended that 'all open lands in the city except the necessary open land to serve as a garden or annexure to a building should be taxed at a higher rate' in order 'to encourage building on a large scale'.

[1] *Report of the Special Housing Committee, Corporation of Madras*, 1934, p. 171.

[2] ibid., p. 18.

In order to make overcrowding illegal after the provision of increased accommodation, detailed regulations were suggested for the fixing of minimum standards of accommodation and the enforcement of such standards.

In the field of middle-class housing, as in the case of the slums, it is fairly clear that unless there is public intervention the problem of overcrowding will not be solved. *Laissez-faire* has broken down and left the city with an appalling situation to face. That fact alone is a sufficient justification for the recommendations of the Special Housing Committee. The city cannot any longer look to private enterprise to supply the needs of the lower middle classes if those needs are to be efficiently met.

There is a further reason why the municipality should itself undertake large-scale middle-class housing—a financial reason. Wisely administered and well managed, a big scheme such as that suggested by the Special Committee might not merely pay its way but provide a steady augmentation of municipal revenues.

Extension, Zoning and Transport

The Special Housing Committee made one specific recommendation regarding the extension of the city boundaries, namely, that the Adyar area to the south of the existing city boundary (1935) should be included within municipal limits. This is a comparatively undeveloped area containing many acres of potential housing sites, and the recommendation that it should be included within the city's administration is sound. It is desirable that the city limits should be extended in advance of development. The tendency in Indian civic development has been for building to take place before the extension of administrative control, and when such extension ultimately takes place new slums have to be incorporated within the city limits. The Madras Director of Town Planning has described this tendency as a 'fundamental error'. 'If the extension takes place before development the opposition of residents in the extension area does not arise. Where necessary, partial exemption from rates may be necessary to render such opposition unreasonable (as adopted in Mambalam).'[1]

The Director of Town Planning has recommended the inclusion within the city, not only of Adyar, but also of

[1] *Report of the Special Housing Committee, Corporation of Madras* (Evidence of Mr. R. Dann, Director of Town Planning), 1934, p. 122.

Sembiam on the north-west and Saidapet on the south-west. The new boundary should be 'drawn well away from the inhabited area'. In his evidence before the Special Housing Committee he wrote :

> It may be objected that the city is already too large to function efficiently as a self-governing unit. The difficulty has been experienced elsewhere and met by entrusting particular functions to Special Bodies or Joint Committees of different bodies or by devolution to local Councils or Committees. In spite of this objection I am in favour of extension, believing that the advantages will outweigh the disadvantages and that economy and efficiency of administration should result from the larger unit. In judging economy in this respect incidence of rates is not the criterion but value for money.

In chapter iv, when dealing with the density of the population, it was shown that in certain areas immediately outside the municipal boundaries the population had grown with considerable rapidity, and it was pointed out that the effective urban population in the lower valleys of the Cooum and the Adyar rivers is almost 100,000. The three areas most noticeably affected by these accretions of population on the edges of the city are on the north (Tiruvottyur), on the west (Villivakkam and Sembiam) and on the south-west (Saidapet and Kodambakkam). A redrawing of the city boundaries which would include these three areas together with the Adyar region should accompany any attempt to replan the housing of the city and reconstruct the slum areas.

Such an extension, implying the development of new housing areas on the fringes of the city will make imperative the rationalization of the present chaotic transport arrangements and so ensure that cheap and efficient means of conveyance are available to all parts of the city.

Financial Responsibility

The publication of the report of the Special Housing Committee in 1934 and its subsequent acceptance by the Corporation of Madras marked an important development in the housing policy of the city. Admirable as the proposals of the Committee are, however, they are as yet only proposals, and unless the important problems of finance and administration can be solved, the valuable work of the Committee will have gone for naught.

Slum rehousing in Madras must necessarily be to a considerable extent 'uneconomic'. A small proportion of the

present residents in the slums may be able to afford rents which represent an economic return on the capital cost of placing them in new and better homes. The rehousing of the poorest classes will certainly have to be heavily subsidized. How is such an extensive project as this is certain to prove, to be financed?

The Special Housing Committee recognized the inability of the Corporation to command sufficient capital to finance a comprehensive scheme of slum clearance and reconstruction and placed the onus of providing such capital entirely upon the Government of Madras. It was recommended that the Government should be requested to make a grant (non-returnable) of Rs. 50 lakhs and a further loan of Rs. 50 lakhs, the latter to be repayable after 40 years and to bear interest charges of 4 per cent. per annum. It was proposed that the interest plus the sinking fund charges should be met from the general revenues of the Corporation, 'either by way of increase in the present rate of property tax or by the creation of a new housing scheme tax or some other special tax'.[1] By this means it was proposed to finance the plans for slum reconstruction.

The cautious finance department of the Government of Madras has not as yet (in 1938) acceded to this request, and is hardly likely to do so on the terms suggested by the Corporation. The issue, however, must sooner or later be faced. That any large-scale housing scheme in Madras city will ultimately have to be financed by a substantial grant and/or loan from the Provincial Government is fairly certain. The financial resources of the Madras Corporation are strained to the utmost in the maintenance of its regular administration. The Corporation can at present command no sources adequate for the raising of a huge capital sum such as will be required for any effective rehousing scheme.

It is reasonable that the Government should bear considerable responsibility in finding the necessary capital. The increasing urgency of the housing problem in Madras city is due entirely to the rapid influx of migrants from the rural districts of the Presidency, and the Government cannot disclaim responsibility for the situation thus created.

It probably will, however, insist that the Corporation shall bear a due share of financial responsibility; and if the housing problem is not to grow even more acute, there is an immediate need for a settlement of this issue. A conference

[1] *Report of the Special Housing Committee*, 1934, p. 14.

between representatives of the Government and the Corporation would almost certainly achieve more rapid and effective results than the pursuit of a leisurely official correspondence. Whatever initial help is forthcoming from the Government, in the finding of capital for housing, it is necessary that the Corporation should take immediate steps to enhance its own revenues. Even if the Government assistance is on the optimistic basis proposed by the Special Housing Committee, the interest and sinking fund charges will be very considerable. On a loan of Rs. 50 lakhs these charges would amount to approximately Rs. 2½ lakhs per year. Such annual charges must necessarily be paid out of revenues already inadequate for current needs.

A detailed analysis of the finances of the city does not lie within the immediate scope of this study. But since finance has hitherto proved the most formidable obstacle to the pursuit of a vigorous and effective housing policy, it is important to point out some lines along which the enlargement of the city's revenues might be sought.

The main sources from which the revenue of the Madras Corporation is derived at present are the consolidated property tax, taxes on companies and professions, licences on vehicles and animals, an entertainment tax and a small income from municipal enterprises of various kinds. There is also a municipal tax on imported timber 'but nine-tenths of the tax collected is refunded under certain conditions if the same timber is re-exported from the city'.

The property tax is by far the most important source of income to the municipality. It is at present levied at the consolidated rate of 15½ per cent., on the annual value of buildings and lands in the city.

The most obvious means of increasing the income of the city is to raise the rate of the property tax. The Director of Town Planning with the Government of Madras has stated recently that Madras city is 'trying to run on a property tax which is less than some small *mofussil* municipalities where problems have not developed anything like the same proportions'. He argued that the city was not getting value for money and suggested that the solution was not to give less in taxes, but more. 'Madras, for the things it is attempting to do or ought to be doing, should have a property tax of 24 per cent., and not 15½ per cent.'[1]

[1] *The Madras Mail*, October 24, 1936, p. 6.

If the city is to maintain an efficient administration and to abolish the filth and degradation of its slums, it must face the necessity of increasing direct taxation.

Apart, however, from an increase in the property tax there are other possible sources of enhanced municipal revenue which might be explored. A terminal tax on railway and port passengers is imposed by the corporations of Calcutta and Rangoon, and its possibilities in Madras might be considered. Calcutta municipality levies a duty on jute; Madras might similarly place a tax of a few annas per ton on the export of ground-nuts and thereby produce a considerable sum of money.[1]

There is no serious attempt at municipal trading in Madras. The remunerative enterprises of the Corporation are negligible —workshops, markets, cart-stands, slaughter-houses, etc., which make no serious addition to the municipal revenues. The question of municipalizing the transport services will almost inevitably arise in connection with the problem of rehousing. This is a potential source of revenue that should be carefully examined. Another urgent need in Madras city is the provision of an efficiently organized milk supply. The incredibly primitive methods of milk distribution in Madras are a menace to the public health. Cattle are housed in the middle of some of the most crowded parts of the city. The milk is delivered twice a day by bringing the cows (accompanied by their calves—either alive or stuffed) around the streets to the doors of the customers' houses and milking them in the presence of the customers. Between 5 a.m. and 8 a.m. and between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. the streets of the residential parts of the city are often thronged with milkmen and their cows and calves. The municipal authorities would be rendering a great service to public health and almost certainly increasing their own revenues if they abolished this primitive method of supplying milk, insisted on the milch cattle being removed from the crowded parts of the city, and organized a series of well-run dairy farms on the outskirts of the city for the production and supply of bottled milk under hygienic conditions.

These are but examples of possible means of increasing the revenues of the city. The whole question of municipal

[1] Note: The export tax on ground-nuts has been advocated for agricultural reasons, with the idea that it would favour the crushing of the nuts before export, while putting no obstacle in the way of export of oil and retention of the oil cake in the country as a very important cattle food.

trading should be examined by experts with a view to its possible extension.

No immediate financial difficulties should be allowed to obscure the large gains which must inevitably accrue to the city from a bold but carefully planned housing policy. It has been said that 'if the laws of health were regarded in India to the same extent as in England, and the same proportion of money was spent on public health, the death-rate in India would be no larger than in England'.[1] The Report of the Royal Commission on Labour[2] contains a paragraph on this question which all those responsible for local administration in India should ponder.

> Expenditure on public health, besides yielding an immense return in human happiness, is bound to produce great economic advantages. There are few directions offering such great opportunities for profitable investment on the part of the State. The economic loss involved in the birth and rearing of great numbers of children who do not live to make any return to the community, in the sickness and disease which debilitate a large proportion of the workers, and in early death, with the consequent reduction of the earning years, is incalculable. Even a small step in the prevention of these ills would have an appreciable effect in increasing the wealth of India; a courageous attack on them might produce a revolution in the standards of life and prosperity. We feel that the time for inaction and delay is past, and that, *particularly in regard to housing, it is imperative that an immediate beginning should be made. To those who assert that India cannot afford to spend more on public health, we would reply that she can no longer afford to do otherwise.*

There is in the administration of the affairs of a municipality a point at which caution merges into stupidity and incompetence; and the maintenance of low rates in the alleged interest of the citizens may be a mark of betrayal rather than a sign of careful stewardship. Joseph Chamberlain's famous slogan 'High rates and a healthy city' helped to make Birmingham a model of competent and far-sighted municipal administration. Madras, on the other hand, has too long pursued the policy of 'low taxes and a high death-rate'. She has been outstripped by younger but more virile and competently-managed Indian cities. Only by a courageous break with the sinister traditions of recent years can she

[1] Dunn, *Indian Journal of Economics*, January 1924; 'The Economic Value of the Prevention of Disease'. Quoted by V. Anstey, *Economic Development of India*, p. 71.

[2] *Report*, 1931, pp. 243-4.

remove the reproach of her slums and recover a dignity worthy of her place as the third city in India.

HOUSING ADMINISTRATION

It is necessary to add a note on the administrative methods by which a large-scale housing policy in Madras city is to be carried out. There seems little hope that, as the Municipal Council is at present constituted, any method of direct municipal control of housing would prove effective. Even if the elected council were a body competent to deal with housing problems, which in most cases it is not, such a council simply has not got the time to do so. The Director of Town Planning in Madras has said recently, 'I know of no large city in India or the East where the problems of development and improvement are being attacked systematically and effectively except through a separate body, or shall we say, through other means than an ordinary elected council'.[1]

One of the most important recommendations of the Special Housing Committee appointed by the Corporation of Madras was that an Improvement Trust should be constituted to construct and look after both slum dwellings and middle-class housing. A detailed account of the recommendations on this point was given in the preceding chapter. Such a Trust, independent of the Corporation, but working in close co-operation with it, is now recognized as the most desirable and effective means of carrying through a large-scale housing scheme that is comprehensive and systematic. The Corporation of Madras has recently reaffirmed the recommendation of the Special Housing Committee by passing unanimously a special resolution calling upon the Government to introduce the necessary legislation to form such a Trust.

It is to be hoped that the Government will act quickly and that the proposed Trust, if formed, will be sufficiently strong and have at its disposal sufficient financial resources to carry out a policy such as that outlined by the Special Housing Committee of the Corporation and developed in these pages.

[1] *The Madras Mail*, October 24, 1936.

Appendix to Chapter IX

Death-Rates per Mille

	Madras	Bombay	Calcutta
1911	42·3	35·88	27·22
1912	38·0	40·02	28·13
1913	40·3	32·70	29·22
1914	47·1	32·70	28·38
1915	36·4	24·17	28·55
1916	34·9	30·78	24·66
1917	38·9	33·83	23·83
1918	61·2	59·44	35·0
1919	53·1	70·52	42·2
1920	41·8	47·10	39·4
1922	43·1	32·13	29·1
1923	38·0	32·74	28·4
1924	41·9	33·44	29·6
1925	47·9	27·55	32·7
1926	45·3	27·56	34·7
1927	42·7	23·84	34·2
1928	51·0	23·59	31·7
1929	42·8	22·90	30·6
1930	43·64	23·79	28·9
1931	35·53	21·43	25·5

CHAPTER X

THE HOMELESS AND THE BEGGAR

In chapter vi an account was given of the numbers of people in Madras city who have no homes and who therefore live on the streets. No solution of the housing problem can be regarded as adequate which ignores the fact of these thousands of homeless street-dwellers, and some provision must be made for dealing with the problem.

The census taken on behalf of the Special Housing Committee (see chapter vi) showed that of the 10,749 persons returned as street-dwellers, 4,734 were in definite employment, 3,358 were casual labourers or unemployed, 181 were described as 'beggars and coolies', and 2,476 were acknowledged beggars.

It is probable that the majority of the street-dwelling labourers are 'on the streets' because of their inability to find suitable housing accommodation at rents which they are able to pay. If that assumption is correct, the provision of such accommodation by a housing scheme such as that outlined and proposed in the preceding chapters would at once remove several thousands of people from the streets. But the professional vagrant and beggar presents a much more complicated problem, and it is a problem so large and serious in Madras city that it demands special attention.

Indian social tradition and religious influences play a part in creating as well as complicating the situation in regard to vagrancy and begging in Madras city. But the dimensions of the problem have been enlarged enormously by the social and economic upheaval consequent upon a phase of transition. We shall deal briefly in a later chapter with the social changes which are taking place in India under the impact of modern conditions. It is relevant to note here, however, that though in general periods of transition in the realm of ideas are usually long, a process of economic transition often produces immediate consequences in social conditions and habits.

Although the great movement which we know as the Renaissance may be said to have covered at least two centuries, yet in its economic aspect it was far shorter, and the generation which was young when the sea route to India was discovered,

witnessed before it was old a series of social and economic changes which were as disconcerting in their suddenness as they were far-reaching in their effects.[1]

One of the most urgent problems thrown up by this particular period of rapid economic transition was the problem of destitution and of begging. Hitherto destitution had been an abnormal element in mediaeval social life. It now became normal.

At the beginning of the middle ages the church was emphatic in proclaiming the duty of all men to work; without going back on that theory, the church at the end of the middle ages was in practice more inclined to emphasize the duty of all men to give alms.[2]

The grim necessity which led the church to make this change in emphasis caused also the creation of some sort of Poor Law ordinances in practically every country in Europe.

It is important to remember that the changes which in the West wrought such disruption and chaos in social and economic life were spread over centuries, while in India similar changes have been crowded into a few decades. It is not surprising that in the rapid and chaotic growth of city life in India the problems of destitution and vagrancy present themselves in a most acute form.

The beggar is ubiquitous in Madras and he pursues his profession almost entirely unhampered by the law. He is to be found at railway stations, tram termini and intermediate stops and bus stands, at temples, mosques and churches and almost everywhere in the city streets, accosting the passers-by with a well-nigh invincible persistence and the doleful wail 'Ayā yennukku paciai irukiruthu' (Sir, I am hungry)—sometimes accompanied by a hollow tattoo played on a bare and empty stomach! The beggar may be young or old, may be a man or a woman, may be able-bodied or may display the most appalling deformities or expose revolting leprous sores. The Madrassi responds to importunity and is moved by human suffering, and street begging is said to be a comparatively lucrative occupation in Madras. The numbers of beggars on the streets would seem to lend support to this view.

Mr. L. S. S. O'Malley has pointed out that 'the problem of social reform in India is complicated by the close connection which the social system has with Hinduism',[3] and this complication arises in connection with any attempt to

[1] F. R. Salter, *Some Early Tracts on Poor Relief*, 1926 (Methuen), p. xvi.
[2] ibid., pp. xvii and xviii.
[3] O'Malley, *India's Social Heritage*, 1934, p. 169 (O.U.P.).

deal with begging. For, in addition to the ordinary beggar described above, there is the religious mendicant, whose calling is regarded with the utmost respect by the orthodox Hindu. Even in the case of the ordinary beggar, the doctrine of *punnium* (merit) appears to many people to give a special value to individual and indiscriminate charity and serves to encourage opposition to any attempt to suppress street begging.

The Sanscrit word *sannyāsa*, which may be translated 'renunciation' or 'world-surrender', stands for something which has had a formative influence in Hindu thought and practice. The *sannyāsī* is a religious devotee who has renounced family, home, property, work and even the worship of the gods and devoted himself to a wandering life, getting his food by begging. For many Hindus he represents the ideal of 'the good life'—complete detachment from the affairs of the world. The real *sannyāsī* is certainly worthy of respect and he does exist. But it is also recognized that the position of the Hindu religious mendicant is very widely exploited; and many of those who wear the garb of the *sannyāsī* and carry a beggar's bowl are mere charlatans, trading on the general readiness to assist the 'holy man'. The attempt to devise legislation to deal with begging in Madras has on at least one occasion been defeated by this religious complication. But there are signs that public opinion is moving slowly towards support of measures to deal drastically with the problem.

The existing legislation in Madras relating to vagrancy and begging is so inadequate as to be quite useless.

It should be pointed out at the outset that there has never been any Poor Law in India. The caste system, the joint family and the village community had their own unwritten poor laws and the indigent were provided for wherever these institutions functioned efficiently. In urban conditions they have ceased so to function and have largely lost their vitality. Many town-dwellers have very slender caste and family affiliations and the old unwritten poor law of India is ineffective in the prevention of pauperism in urban conditions. This explains in part, at least, the widespread prevalence of begging in towns.

In the Madras City Police Act, 1888,[1] there is a provision that 'whoever in any public street, road, thoroughfare, or

[1] Madras City Police Act, 1888, Section 71, Clause xxi (Madras Act No. III of 1888—as modified up to April 1st, 1908), Government Press, Madras, 1929.

place of public resort, begs or applies for alms, or exposes or exhibits any sores, wounds, bodily ailments or deformity with the object of exciting charity or extorting alms shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding fifty rupees or to imprisonment which may extend to one month '.

This law looks well on paper, but is quite ineffective in practice and has for many years been virtually a dead letter.

To provide for fining a beggar up to fifty rupees is absurd. To send him to jail for a month or less may remove him temporarily from the streets, but he is almost certain to return on his release. Moreover, a large percentage of Madras beggars are diseased, and jail does not seem to be the right place for this pitiable mass of humanity—the aged and incurable, leprous and feeble-minded, blind and deaf, people with ghastly running sores and shocking deformities.

In the case of the healthy vagrant, the law, if it is to be effective, must provide for his compulsory detention in an institution where he can learn a trade. This the present legislation does not do.

The Madras Corporation in 1924 set up a committee 'to consider and formulate proposals for the prevention of professional begging in the city of Madras '.[1] This committee published a report in which it was recommended that able-bodied beggars should, at the discretion of the magistrates, be committed to workhouses or suitable settlements.[2] Many years have elapsed since this recommendation was made, but no certified workhouse has been established, while the numbers of able-bodied beggars have increased steadily.

The Madras City Municipal Act, 1919,[3] authorizes the expenditure of municipal funds on 'the provision and maintenance of rest-houses, alms-houses, poor-houses, pounds and other works of public utility', and the Corporation has in fact started one Poor House, which is supported entirely from municipal funds. This Poor House, begun in 1927, is situated at Tondiarpet. The number of inmates varies from month to month but is normally about 150. No annual report is published and the Administration Report of the Corporation gives a bare minimum of financial information.

[1] *Report on the Beggar Problem*, p. 1 (Madras Corporation Committee, 1924).

[2] ibid., p. 6.

[3] Act IV of 1919, Schedule V, Section 4.

In 1932-3 and 1933-4 the expenditure on the home was as follows :[1]

	1932-3			1933-4		
	Rs.	A.	P.	Rs.	A.	P.
Establishment ...	3,005	14	0	2,922	15	6
Labour ...	1,734	7	3	1,747	5	8
Contingencies ...	11,947	4	0	9,768	5	8

Any further detail must be sought at the Home itself. The writer visited it in 1934 and found about 140 inmates of whom approximately one-third were women. They were nearly all old and many were infirm, appeared to be well-fed and well cared for, but the able-bodied were provided with no means of usefully occupying their time and made little or no contribution in service to the upkeep of the home. Even the cooking arrangements are carried out by paid cooks.

The home is useful as far as it goes, but with something like three thousand beggars on the streets it cannot go very far without greatly increased resources. It is also handicapped by the inadequacy of the existing legislation. Under the present system the inmates enter the home voluntarily and are at liberty to leave at will. This voluntary basis of residence means in the first place that only the most infirm or least enterprising beggars seek admission and, in the second place, that when they are there the home can only retain them by permitting them to lead a lazy life.

There are two other important institutions in Madras city which dispense indoor charity on lines similar to those followed in the Corporation Poor House—the Monegar Choultry and the Friend-in-Need Society's Home.

The Monegar Choultry is an old-established institution[2] which exists for 'the sheltering, feeding and clothing of the destitute, the incurably stricken poor, and for relieving as far as possible the distress of such indigent persons as are not in a condition to work for and earn their own livelihood'.[3] In 1934 there were about 100 inmates in the choultry—many of them old and infirm. As in the Corporation Poor House there is no work or service expected of the residents, and their presence in the choultry is entirely voluntary.

The Friend-in-Need Society's Home provides both indoor and outdoor charity for destitute Europeans and Anglo-Indians.

[1] *Administration Report, Corporation of Madras*, 1933-4, p. 66.
[2] Vide Pamphlet on 'Origin and History of the Monegar and Rajah of Venkatagiri Choultries' (Madras).
[3] Madras Government Order No. 59, Home (Miscellaneous), dated 23rd January 1917.

In 1931 the home had 103 inmates.[1] It differs from the Corporation Poor House and the Monegar Choultry in that it has workshops in which the residents as well as the needy non-residents are set to useful employment.

There is an obvious need in Madras city for more adequate institutional provision for dealing with the various classes of beggars: (1) the infirm, both aged and diseased, (2) the juvenile beggars, and (3) the able-bodied. The provision of such accommodation must be accompanied by legislation which will make possible the compulsory detention of beggars in suitable institutions.

The difficulties which hitherto have beset the path of reform in this field have proved so formidable that despite years of talk and the pious resolutions of the reformers, every attempt at practical reform has proved abortive. Legislation has been deferred on the pretext that there are no institutions adequate to the task of dealing with the mass of beggars in the streets of Madras. Institutions have not been provided because of financial stringency and it is ostensibly on finance the talked-of reforms have invariably broken down. The real reason for the impotence of those who seek reform lies, however, in the deep division in public opinion on the whole question. Reference has already been made to the religious background which encourages toleration and freedom for the beggar. This sentiment finds organized expression in the Annadhana Samajams (charity societies) which provide free meals for the poor, collecting large numbers of beggars regularly for this purpose. This practice seems to encourage rather than discourage professional begging and surprisingly large sums of money are spent annually on this form of well-intentioned but misguided charity.

The two largest Annadhana Samajams in the city are the Triplicane Annadhana Samajam and the Chennapuri Annadhana Samajam, and their income and expenditure for 1933-4 was as follows:[2]

	Income			*Expenditure*		
	Rs.	A.	P.	Rs.	A.	P.
Triplicane Annadhana Samajam ...	4,494	15	0	3,456	15	1
Chennapuri Annadhana Samajam ...	11,739	7	8	8,372	3	10

[1] *Report of the Friend-in-Need Society, Madras*, 1931.
[2] *Administration Report, Madras Corporation*, 1933-4, p. 189.

The combined income of these two societies in 1933-4 exceeded the total expenditure on the Corporation Poor House in the same year by approximately 2,000 rupees.

It is interesting to learn that towards the support of these thriving charities—and there are few more thriving in the city of Madras—the Corporation votes small annual grants from public funds. In 1932-3, the Triplicane Samajam received Rs. 162 from this source, and the Chennapuri Samajam Rs. 270.[1]

The fact that the Corporation, whose own Beggar Committee has recommended more far-sighted and effective means of dealing with the beggar problem, should continue to give moral and financial support to organizations which exist for the dispensation of indiscriminate charity in the city, is an indication of how flaccid and vacillating public opinion on the question is. And the fact that these organizations can, independently of Corporation support, command such wide and generous help from the public indicates the extent to which this form of charity is favoured.[2]

In 1930 a non-official bill was drafted[3] for the amendment of the City Police Act so as 'to provide for the better controlling of beggars in the city of Madras'. Such was the delay and obstruction that this very necessary measure never reached the Legislative Council Chamber. It received a great deal of verbal commendation during the stages of preliminary discussion; but there was never a convincing body of public opinion behind it, and the unobtrusive obstruction from reactionary quarters was sufficient to result in the final frustration of the proposed amending bill.

The Special Housing Committee appointed in 1933 included in its report[4] several important recommendations relating to the beggar problem.

The Committee proposed that:

(1) Diseased and infirm beggars who cannot earn their bread should be confined by law to poor houses and fed at public cost. The present Beggars' Home should be fully

[1] *Administration Report, Madras Corporation*, 1933-4, p. 189.

[2] In the *Madras Mail* of October 3, 1936, there is an account of the opening of a new extension to the buildings of the Pursawalkam Annadhana Samajam in Madras. The opening ceremony was performed by a former Acting Governor of Fort St. George. The report indicates that this method of dispensing charity (i.e. feeding the poor) still commands distinguished patronage and generous financial support.

[3] By Mr. F. E. James, a member of the Madras Legislative Council.

[4] *Report of the Special Housing Committee*, 1934, pp. 21-3.

utilized and, if necessary, extended. For this purpose the co-operation of private charities should be invited.

(2) Able-bodied beggars should be sent by law to work-houses (which should be established) where they will have to work for their bread.

(3) Children found begging in the streets should be compulsorily detained in suitable homes, which the Government should be requested to establish and towards which the Corporation should contribute.

These recommendations are but the reaffirmation of the demands which enlightened opinion in the city has been making for many years. The Special Housing Committee did, however, make one new proposal to the effect that 'Langarkhanas and rest-houses should be constructed for housing the homeless and that certain parts of these Langarkhanas and rest-houses should be set apart for people who are absolutely paupers and other parts should be let out to people on a small reasonable rent per day'.[1] This suggestion obviously refers to the homeless as distinct from the begging community. As has already been pointed out, there is little or nothing to distinguish the non-begging street-dweller from the ordinary slum-dweller, save the fact that he has not got a house. There seems, therefore, to be no special reason why a peculiar type of public institution should be provided for the non-begging street-dweller. If slum-dwellers are to be rehoused on lines similar to those indicated earlier in this book, the homeless street-dweller, who is not a beggar, should be provided for within the framework of that scheme.

A further interesting, if not very practicable, suggestion of the Special Housing Committee was that 'some provision should be made to control the immigration of homeless people into the city'.[2] The committee remarked that 'it is not easy to suggest a complete remedy for the purpose'.[3] It is quite certain that any merely negative effort to prevent such migration into the city will prove futile. The contention of this thesis is that the migration to the towns in South India is, in the main, the migration of despair, caused primarily by low or falling prices and consequent agricultural distress. If that contention is correct, an effective approach to the problem of controlling urban immigration will be found, not in the negative prohibition of entry to the city, which would at any rate be impossible to effect, but in measures for the

[1] *Report*, 1934, p. 22.
[2] ibid., p. 22.
[3] ibid., p. 22.

relief of rural distress in times of depression. The final solution would seem to lie in some method of price control. That subject, however, raises questions which are beyond the scope of this discussion.

To return to the general problem of begging. All the details of a clear-cut programme to deal with the situation have already been fully canvassed in Madras—adequate vagrancy legislation, the need for an institution or institutions for the detention and useful training of the able-bodied beggar, the segregation of the infirm and diseased, etc.

Juvenile beggars may be dealt with under the Madras Children's Act, 1920, and the official and non-official institutions which already exist for the purpose of implementing this Act.[1] The Madras Children's Act (Act No. IV of 1920), Part IV, Section 29, provides that :

> any person apparently under the age of 14 years (*a*) found wandering and not having any home or settled place of abode or visible means of subsistence, or is found wandering and having no parent or guardian, or a parent or guardian who does not exercise any proper guardianship; or (*b*) is found destitute, not being an orphan, and having both parents, or his surviving parent, or in the case of an illegitimate child, his mother, undergoing transportation or imprisonment; or (*c*) is under the care of a parent or guardian who, by reason of criminal or drunken habits, is unfit to have the care of the child; or (*d*) frequents the company of any reputed thief; may be brought before a court by any police officer or other person authorised by the local Government, and the court may authorise him to be sent to a Junior Certified School.

This Act does not provide specifically for dealing with children who beg and therefore requires amendment.

The greatest single obstacle to the solution of the beggar problem in Madras city is popular sentiment. Finance is a difficulty but ought not to be insurmountable.

What is needed at present is a sustained programme of public enlightenment which will aim :

(1) at showing that the constructive institutional treatment of the beggar is not incompatible with traditional ideals of charity;

[1] See Annual Reports of the Madras Children's Aid Society and the Madras Society for the Protection of Children. Both these Societies do excellent work and receive substantial financial support from the Government of Madras.

(2) at securing the necessary legislative and financial support from the Government for the initiation of a policy for the abolition of street begging; and

(3) at the co-ordination of all unofficial charitable effort with a view to pooling the resources available for the support of the necessary institutions.

If the vagrancy laws were suitably amended and strictly enforced, the scope which at present exists for large-scale indiscriminate charity would largely disappear, and the Annadhana Samajams might be persuaded to divert their resources into more constructive channels. The generosity which at present produces no permanent result save the subjective satisfaction or spiritual benefit of the donor, might, under a sounder system, achieve also the permanent benefit of those who receive as well as those who give.

The combination of the resources of the present haphazard charities of Madras would go a long way towards providing the necessary institutions for dealing with the beggar problem.

PART IV

POVERTY

CHAPTER XI

WAGES

'INDIA has always been considered a most wealthy and opulent country, more favoured by nature than any other in the world, a land literally flowing with milk and honey, where the soil yields all that is necessary for the existence of its happy people almost without cultivation.'[1] Thus did the Abbé Dubois, who lived in India from 1792 to 1823, interpret contemporary European ideas of India's economic condition. Dubois attributed this popular eighteenth-century notion of India to 'the great wealth accumulated by a few of its native princes, the large fortunes so rapidly acquired by many Europeans, its valuable diamond mines, the quality and quantity of its pearls, the abundance of its spices and scented woods, the fertility of its soil, and the, at one time, unrivalled superiority of its various manufactures: all these have caused admiration and wonder from time immemorial. One would naturally suppose that a nation which could supply so many luxuries would surpass all others in wealth.' So widespread and deep-rooted was this view of India as a supremely wealthy land that 'those who, after visiting the country and obtaining exact and authentic information about the real condition of its inhabitants, have dared to affirm that India is the poorest and most wretched of all the civilized countries of the world, have simply not been believed'.[2]

Today the poverty of India is common knowledge and is denied by no one. Of the extent of that poverty it is impossible to generalize with any approach to accuracy. The statistical materials available for estimates of the national income or of average per capita income are incomplete, and such as do exist are frequently unreliable. Crop production statistics, for example, 'leave much to be desired',[3] while 'statistical information about other important parts of agricultural income, such as the output of animal husbandry, are

[1] Abbé J. A. Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies* (translated and edited by H. K. Beauchamp), Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1928 impression, p. 80.

[2] Dubois, ibid., p. 80.

[3] Bowley and Robertson, *A Scheme for an Economic Census of India* (Government of India, New Delhi), 1934, p. 9.

almost completely lacking, and statistics of industrial production are patchy in the extreme. Undeterred by these difficulties various people have from time to time attempted to estimate the national income.'[1]

The earliest recorded effort to estimate the national income of India took the form of a computation of the average per capita annual income which was made by Sir Dadabhai Naoroji and applied to the year 1870.[2] His estimate is frequently stated to have been Rs. 20 per annum. In the 1901 edition of his book, *Poverty and Unbritish Rule in India*, Sir Dadabhai wrote:

'The total production per head will be as follows:

	s.	*d.*
Central Provinces	43	5
Punjab	49	5
N.-W. Provinces	35	5
Bengal	37	5
Madras	35	5
Bombay	79	5
Oudh	35	5
Average ...	40	

When further allowance is made for bad seasons I cannot help thinking that the result will be nearer 30*s*. than 40*s*. a head.'[3]

This estimate led to a number of similar attempts to calculate the annual per capita income of the country. These are of varying degrees of accuracy and none can be regarded as trustworthy. Lord Curzon in his budget speech delivered on March 27, 1901,[4] estimated the average Indian income at Rs. 30 per head 'as against Rs. 27 in 1880', but recognized that there was 'an element of the conjectural' in the figures. Curzon was attacked by Mr. William Digby, who described him as 'the much misled viceroy'.[5] Digby, whose arguments on the subject were 'notoriously biassed',[6] estimated the average annual income at Rs. 17-4.

[1] Bowley and Robertson, *A Scheme for an Economic Census of India* (Government of India, New Delhi), 1934, p. 9.

[2] Dadabhai Naoroji, *Poverty and Unbritish Rule in India* (Swan Sonnenscheim & Co., London), 1901.

[3] ibid., p. 25.

[4] See *Lord Curzon in India* (Macmillan), 1906, p. 92.

[5] See Digby, *Prosperous British India* (Fisher Unwin), 1901, p. 573.

[6] Vera Anstey, *Economic Development of India* (Longmans, Green & Co.).

Mr. F. J. Atkinson made two careful estimates for the years 1875 and 1895 and concluded that the average per capita income in the former year was Rs. 30·5, and for the latter, Rs. 39·5.[1] In 1911, Mr. Findlay Shirras brought Lord Curzon's figures up to date and his calculations based on conditions in that year was Rs. 50.[2]

In South India, Dr. Gilbert Slater was responsible for two estimates of the average income per head in the presidency of Madras. In *Some South Indian Villages*, Dr. Slater wrote: 'My own estimate for the average income per head in the Madras Presidency in 1916-17 is not less than Rs. 72.'[3] Three years later Dr. Slater estimated the average income per head for the presidency at 'a little over Rs. 100 per annum'.[4] It is pointed out, however, that 'the agricultural income of the year 1919-20 was not maintained in the years that followed'.[5] The year 1919-20 presented the unusual phenomenon of 'exceptionally high prices combined with good harvests'.

We have quoted but a few of the many attempts which have been made to compute the national dividend of India.[6] They are perhaps chiefly valuable as a warning against dogmatism on the subject.

The difficulties which arise in connection with the attempt to estimate the national income either by the census of production method or by the money method (i.e. the calculation of the incomes of persons), are most formidable even in a country like England which is furnished with most elaborate statistical data. In India the difficulties are at present quite insurmountable, and this brief list of estimates is of interest, not from a scientific standpoint, because these computations can hardly be regarded as much more than informed guess-work, but because, despite the wide variety in the amounts estimated, not one of them exceeds Rs. 100

[1] Atkinson, 'Income and Wealth of British India', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, June 1902.

[2] See *Enquiry into Working-Class Budgets in Bombay*, 1923, p. 11.

[3] *Some South Indian Villages* (Ed. Slater) (Oxford University Press), 1918, p. 16.

[4] Slater, *Southern India* (George Allen & Unwin), 1936, p. 355.

[5] ibid., p. 355.

[6] See also: Anstey, *Economic Development of India*, pp. 438ff.; Wadia and Joshi, *The Wealth of India* (Macmillan), 1925, p. 108; Shah and Khambatta, *Wealth and Taxable Capacity in India* (P. S. King), 1924, pp. 62-8; Jathar and Beri, *Indian Economics* (Oxford University Press), 1932, pp. 151ff.

(approximately £7/-10).[1] Even the most optimistic attempts to arrive at the average per capita income of India imply a general level of distressing poverty and standards of living very remote from those with which Western Europe is familiar.

When the Royal Commission on Labour visited India it found that no part of its task presented greater difficulties than that which was concerned with 'the standard of living of the workers'.[2] The Commission commented on the lack of statistical data. Even for 'a summary of the general position' it was found that 'the essential material was wanting'. 'The only investigations so far made with any claim to statistical adequacy are those conducted by the Bombay Labour Office in the principal centres of that presidency and one enquiry into the standard and cost of living of the working-classes in Rangoon.'

The task to which this chapter is directed is very much narrower than that of the Royal Commission on Labour. It is limited to an examination of the problems of poverty and standards of living in Madras city. But in this field, narrow as it is, we are beset by precisely the same difficulties as confronted the Royal Commission in its larger task. As yet, no investigation of the economic condition of the masses in Madras city that can lay any claim to statistical adequacy has been made. Dr. Bowley and Mr. D. H. Robertson have laid emphasis upon the need for urban surveys, and commented on the lack of information on urban economic conditions in India as a whole. 'So far as we can ascertain', they wrote, 'no attempt has been made to estimate the incomes or production of these towns as a whole, though there have been some studies on special subjects, such as housing and labour conditions, and on particular occupations, and some sporadic statements of wage-rates. The statistics relating to factories and the statistics of incomes assessed to tax cover only very small proportions of the population.'[3] In Madras city the proportion of factory labour to the total working population is small, and the range of minor industries, occupations, trades, etc., is so wide that nothing short of a complete occupational census, which elicited information

[1] And that for an exceptionally favourable year and in one part of India (i.e. Madras Presidency) only.

[2] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, p. 194.

[3] Bowley and Robertson, ibid., p. 24.

regarding earnings and wages, would suffice to give a complete picture of economic conditions in the city. The provincial census reports and those published separately for the city provide much detail as to occupations,[1] but, of course, do not contain any information on incomes or wage-rates.

While it is true that in Madras city an examination of 'industrial' conditions alone would not give anything like a *complete* picture of the life and work of the people, it is necessary to guard against the drawing of a sharp distinction between 'industrial' and other forms of labour. The industrial worker need not be considered as belonging to a class apart, merely because he works in a large factory. Though the artisan classes (i.e. skilled workers) undoubtedly enjoy a standard of wages and of living much above that of the rank and file of the poorest classes, there are in all the large-scale industries unskilled coolies who earn the most meagre wages and who belong to the very lowest strata of economic society. These latter are distinguished from the 'non-industrial' casual labourers only by the fact that they enjoy comparative security of employment.

Nor is there in Madras a sharp distinction between industrial and non-industrial labour outside working hours. 'It is impossible to treat the industrial worker in isolation in this presidency, for the good reason that he does not live in separate communities. For example, the Adi-Dravida in Madras who is employed in the mill or factory lives in a *paracheri* among members of his community following a great variety of other occupations, while the caste artisan or factory employee similarly lives among other people who earn their living in different ways.'[2]

Since no adequate occupational census of Madras city has yet been attempted and no comprehensive statistical data relating to wages and incomes exist, it is necessary for the purposes of this enquiry to rely for information regarding wages and family income upon the more highly-organized industries. The volumes containing the evidence submitted

[1] This information needs to be handled with care. Employers are not separated from employed. The classification is in some cases so general as to be of little value; and the figures for some specific occupations may be misleading. It must also be borne in mind that frequently a man returns his hereditary caste occupation, which in many cases is not his real one.

[2] *Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, Evidence, vol. VII, part I, pp. 12-13.

to the Royal Commission on Labour in India include a mass of valuable material provided by employers, trade unions and the Government of Madras. This study of poverty in Madras city is based to a large extent on that evidence.

An analysis of the material there provided will, it is believed, indicate the main features of the economic life of the working classes in Madras. There is not the material necessary for a quantitative analysis and such has not been attempted. But an examination of the economic conditions of a typical cross-section of the poorer classes in the city will help to make clear the nature of the problem of poverty in Madras.

The Buckingham & Carnatic Mills in Madras employed in 1930, 9,178 persons[1] in the textile industry. The employees in these mills represent a stable and more or less permanent labour force.[2] Working conditions in the mills are good and it has been claimed by the managers of the mills that they pay 'the highest wages in India, taking all allowances into consideration as well, i.e. bonus, gratuity funds, etc.'.[3] Whether that claim can be sustained or not, these mills can be regarded as providing industrial employment under favourable conditions, as Indian conditions go, and the wages paid may be taken as representative of the earnings among the more fortunate classes of industrial employees.

Messrs. Binny & Co., the Managing Agents of the Buckingham & Carnatic Mills, submitted to the Royal Commission on Labour in India, a list of 'some representative wages paid in the various departments'[4] of these mills to both time workers and piece workers.

For time workers there is a minimum and a maximum wage. The workers start on the minimum and advance gradually by annual increments to the maximum. It is pointed out by the management that as their labour 'is becoming more and more permanent and only a small percentage leave annually, the average wage in each case is

[1] *Royal Commission on Labour in India,* 1931, Evidence, vol. VII, part II, p. 168.

[2] ibid., Evidence, vol. VII, part I, p. 133. 'Practically all our labour can now be considered permanent' (Evidence of Messrs. Binny & Co., Managing Agents of the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills). See also pp. 146 and 204.

[3] ibid., Evidence, vol. VII, part II, p. 175.

[4] ibid., Evidence, vol. VII, part I, p. 146.

nearer the maximum than the minimum '.[1] The list of wages paid to time workers is as follows :[2]

Time Workers: Monthly Wages

	Minimum Rs. A. P.		Maximum per day Rs. A. P.
Coolies in all departments ...	0 12 6	to	0 14 0
Mixing and Carding—			
Assistant maistries ...	1 3 0	to	1 8 0
Machine tenters ...	0 12 9	to	0 15 0
Strippers and grinders ...	0 13 9	to	1 1 0
Drawing tenters ...	0 13 9	to	1 1 0
Roller coverers ...	0 15 6	to	1 3 0
Spinning—			
Chucklers	0 13 9	to	1 1 0
Bobbin carriers ...	0 12 6	to	0 14 0
Doffers (boys), full time ...	0 7 6	to	0 9 6
Doffers (boys), half time ...	0 3 9	to	0 4 9
Sizing—			
Head maistry	2 3 0	to	2 11 0
Assistant maistry ...	1 8 0	to	2 0 0
Sizing tenters, 1st class ...	1 5 3	to	1 10 0
Sizing tenters, 2nd class ...	0 15 0	to	1 3 0
Warehouse—			
Machine tenters ...	0 13 0	to	0 15 6
Cloth examiners ...	0 14 3	to	1 3 0
Stampers	0 14 3	to	1 1 0
Dyeing and finishing—			
Bleachers	0 13 0	to	1 1 0
Machine tenters, 1st class ...	1 2 0	to	1 8 0
Machine tenters, 2nd class ...	0 13 9	to	1 1 0

[1] *Royal Commission on Labour in India,* 1931, Evidence, vol. VII, part I, p. 146.

[2] 1930 wages. *N.B.*—Wages in organized industry in India are usually paid monthly. For exceptions to this general practice see *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India,* 1931, pp. 236-7.

	Minimum per day Rs. A. P.		Maximum per day Rs. A. P.
Engine and boilers—			
Head engine drivers ...	1 14 0	to	3 6 0
Assistant engine drivers ...	1 4 0	to	1 12 0
Boiler maistry	1 4 0	to	1 12 0
Head fireman	1 9 0	to	1 13 0
Assistant fireman ...	1 4 0	to	1 8 0
Fireman	0 15 0	to	1 3 0
Boiler coolies	0 13 0	to	0 14 6
Mechanic shop—			
Head maistries ...	2 8 0	to	3 0 0
Assistant maistries ...	1 14 0	to	2 6 0
Fitters, 1st class ...	2 5 0	to	2 11 0
Fitters, 2nd class ...	1 4 0	to	2 2 0
Fitters, 3rd class ...	0 15 6	to	1 3 0
Machinemen	0 15 6	to	1 3 0
Moulders, 1st class ...	2 5 0	to	2 11 0
Moulders, 2nd class ...	1 4 0	to	2 2 0
Moulders, 3rd class ...	0 15 6	to	1 3 0

The lowest paid full-time adult workers are the coolies and bobbin carriers. Assuming an average of 25 working days in a month, their monthly earnings range from a minimum of Rs. 19-8-6 to a maximum of Rs. 21-14-0.

On the other hand, a head maistry may earn a minimum monthly wage of Rs. 62-8-0 and a maximum of Rs. 75, while a head engine driver may earn a maximum monthly income of Rs. 84-6 for 25 days' work and Rs. 87-12 for 26 days. These latter figures represent the highest maximum wages quoted by the management for operatives in their mills. The management estimated that 'the average wage of all men on time work' was about Rs. 26 per month 'excluding indirect payments such as bonus, etc.'.[1] It may be safely assumed that in view of the relatively limited number of highly paid operatives, the majority of the time workers in the Buckingham & Carnatic Mills are in receipt of wages of less than Rs. 25 per mensem. Detailed piece work rates were not quoted in the evidence submitted to the Royal

[1] *Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, Evidence, vol. VII, part II, p. 146.

Commission. But the approximate monthly earnings of some of the grades of piece workers were quoted as follows :[1]

	Rs. per month
Carding—	
Head jobbers	83
Frame jobbers	55
Card jobbers	50
Slubbing tenters	35
Intermediate tenters	29
Roving tenters	24
Spinning—	
Side jobbers	58
Frame jobbers	38
Doffing jobbers (doffing boys on time work)	30
Twisting and drawing—	
Drawers	37
Reachers	25
Warpers	45
Weavers—Northrop looms	45

These wages, with the exception of those quoted for roving tenters and reachers, are relatively high. The average of the thirteen examples given being Rs. 42-9-10 per mensem. That this is higher than the average earnings of all piece workers in the Buckingham & Carnatic Mills is admitted by the managing agents, who have stated that 'the average earnings of all employees on piece work is about Rs. 32 per month, excluding indirect payments such as bonus, etc.'.[2]

Evidence regarding wages in these mills was also submitted by the Buckingham & Carnatic Mills Employees' Union.[3] While the employers quoted maximum as well as minimum wages for time workers, and figures for piece workers, which, as we have seen, are well above the average earnings for piece workers, the representatives of the Union quoted minimum wages only in each case.[4] The rates of wages quoted by the Union for male adult workers confirm the minimum rates for time workers given by the managing

[1] *Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, Evidence, vol. VII, part I, p. 147.

[2] ibid., part I, p. 147.

[3] ibid., p. 218.

[4] ibid., p. 218.

agents. For example, it was calculated (according to the management minimum) that a coolie working 25 days a month would earn Rs. 19-8-6. The Buckingham & Carnatic Mills Employees' Union estimated the minimum monthly earnings of coolies at Rs. 19-9-0. In the case of piece work quotations the Union figures are in every class (which is also represented in the management figures) lower than those of the management. For example:

	Rs. per mensem	
	Management	*Union*
Roving tenters	24	22 0 0
Intermediate tenters	29	24 12 0
Slubbing tenters	35	33 6 0
Weaving (Northrop)	45	40 13 3

There is no real discrepancy, however, in these figures since those of the management were quoted as 'approximate',[1] while those of the Union were stated to be 'the minimum wages in each class'.[2]

With reference to the important distinction between real wages and money wages, there are no cost of living index numbers available for Madras. But Messrs. Binny & Co. claimed that in recent years there had been a substantial increase in both real and money wages. As a proof of the increase in money wages they quote the following figures for one of their mills.[3]

Year	Average wage in rupees Rupees	Increase on 1914 Per cent	Increase on 1919 Per cent	Increase on previous year[4] Per cent
1914	10·6	...	...	...
1919	15·0	41·5	...	...
1920	22·9	116·0	52·6	52·6
1922	25·1	136·7	67·3	9·6
1923	25·7	142·3	71·3	2·3
1924	26·3	148·1	75·3	2·3
1925	27·0	155·1	80·2	2·8
1926	27·6	160·3	84·0	2·1
1927	28·4	167·9	89·3	2·9
1928	29·3	176·4	95·3	3·1
1929	29·7	180·1	98·0	1·3

[1] *Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, Evidence, vol. VII, part I, p. 147.

[2] ibid., p. 218.

[3] ibid., p. 147.

[4] The gradual annual increase is accounted for by the system of minimum and maximum rates for each grade of workers, combined with the fact that

Messrs. Binny & Co. estimate that the cost of living in Madras which 'in 1919 was 75 per cent. above that of 1914 has declined to 55 per cent. in 1929'.[1] According to the above table, money wages in the Buckingham & Carnatic Mills are shown to have increased by 180 per cent. since 1914, while over the same period the cost of living is estimated to have increased by 55 per cent. Since 1919, however, money wages are shown to have increased by 'approximately 98 per cent.',[2] and during the same period it is estimated that the cost of living has fallen appreciably.

It is pointed out that these increases do not 'include bonuses, gratuities, etc., amounting from 25 per cent. to 30 per cent. extra'.[3]

Messrs. Binny's calculations as to the movement of prices are based upon the cost of commodities sold in the workers' store at the mills. That these cost of living estimates are not exaggerated is seen by a comparison with the index numbers of commodity prices issued by the Department of Statistics of the Government of India for All India. These index numbers are based upon the price movements of 39 articles.[4] The index numbers for the years 1914, 1919 and 1929 were as follows:

Year	*Index No.*	*Percentage increase over 1914*
1914	147	...
1919	276	87·7
1929	203	38·0

These figures would suggest that Messrs. Binny & Co. have erred on the side of caution in their cost of living estimates; but they are All-India figures and they cover a much wider range of commodities than is included in the budget of

in recent years the labour in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills has become very settled.

Note.—For a general account of the Development of Trade Unionism in Madras after the war see Slater, *Southern India* (Ref. pp. 322ff). This development had a definite bearing on the rise in money wages in the immediate post-war period.

[1] *Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, Evidence, vol. VII, part I, p. 147.

[2] ibid.

[3] ibid.

[4] Chablani, *Studies in Indian Currency and Exchange* (Oxford University Press), 1931, pp. 53-4. Statistical Abstract for British India (66th Number).

an industrial worker, and so cannot be regarded as exactly comparable with the cost of living of the Madras mill worker.

A further comparison may be made with the movement of rice and ragi prices in Madras presidency. One or other of these foodstuffs forms the staple item in the diet of the average South Indian, and a high proportion of family expenditure among the industrial classes goes to the purchase of one or other or both. Hence the rice and ragi prices have a peculiar importance in any cost of living estimate in South India.

The following figures represent the average annual retail prices current for rice and ragi in Madras presidency in the years 1914, 1919 and 1929.

Year	*Average retail price of rice and ragi in rupees per maund*	*Percentage increase over 1914*
1914	4·5	...
1919	7·9	75·5
1929	6·5	44·4

The movement of prices in these commodities over the years in question is a striking confirmation of the Binny calculations for the years 1914-19; while for the years 1919-29 it would seem that Binny's estimate of the extent to which prices fell erred, if at all, on the conservative side.

The Report of the Royal Commission contains some relevant remarks on the movement of prices and wages over this period.

A sharp rise in prices took place towards and after the end of the war. Increases in wages were granted in the leading industries, but these did not, as a rule, meet the rise in prices, and by the middle of 1920 the level of real wages was generally lower than before the war. In 1920 and 1921 there was a general rise in wages; prices reached their highest point in the autumn of 1920, and the general tendency thereafter was downward, so that by 1923 the workers were generally better off than before the war. Since then prices have fallen substantially; there have been some reductions of wages, but there has been no general fall in wages commensurate with that of prices, and the general level of real wages for industrial workers is probably higher at the moment than at any previous period. We are writing, however, at a time when a remarkably sharp fall in

prices has produced an unusual position; the Bombay working-class cost of living index number, which stood at 40 per cent. over the 1914 level in July 1930, had fallen to 22 per cent. in December. As it would be dangerous to assume that the present position is stable we should make it clear that, in discussing facts bearing on the standard of life of the workers we are dealing with the position not later than a year ago (i.e. 1929-30). Indeed many of our facts relate to earlier dates.[1]

The fall in prices did in fact continue throughout 1931, and the level of prices has remained consistently low in subsequent years (up till 1938).

This survey of wage conditions in the most important of Madras' large-scale industries and in the largest of its mills gives some insight into the economic conditions of a large and important section of industrial labour in the city. But, as has been emphasized before, it must be remembered that these conditions represent Madras labour in the most favourable circumstances and must not be regarded as typical. The minimum wage of a coolie in the Buckingham & Carnatic Mills, shockingly low and inadequate as it is, according to western standards, represents a higher level of earning power than large sections of coolie labour in the city can command.

Before turning from the question of 'industrial' wages, it will be of value to quote some of the evidence on wages available from other sources than the large textile mills.

The Employers' Federation of South India quoted to the Royal Commission on Labour the following general wage rates for industrial labourers in Madras.[2]

	Rs. per mensem
Unskilled young adults (men) ...	13 to 14
Unskilled adults (men)	18 to 20
Semi-skilled adults (men) ...	23 to 25
Skilled adults (men)	35 to 60
Piece workers (men)	30 to 40
Unskilled piece workers (women) ...	14 to 18

The Chairman of the Madras Port Trust told the Royal Commission[3] that 'generally speaking' coolies employed at the harbour earned 13 annas a day for an 11-hour day, and

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, pp. 196-7.
[2] *Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, Evidence, vol. VII, part I, p. 208.
[3] ibid., p. 277.

11 annas a day for an 8½-hour day. Women earned 8 annas and the pay of artisans varied from Re.1-2 to Rs. 4 per day. In terms of monthly earnings (on the basis of a 25-day month) this works out at :

	Rs. per month
Women	12 8 0
Men (8½-hour day)	17 3 0
Men (11-hour day)	20 5 0

for coolie labour at the harbour.

Further examples of wage rates are provided in the evidence of the Madras Aluminium Labour Union,[1] of the Public Works Department Workers' Union,[2] and of the Madras Electric Tramway and Supply Corporation Employees' Union.[3]

The Aluminium factory is situated in Triplicane and, as its name indicates, produces a variety of aluminium goods and utensils. The maximum wage, which is (presumably) paid to skilled artisans, is said to be Rs. 2-8 per day, while what is described as the 'prevailing rate of wages' (by which is probably meant the 'minimum') is said to be from 1½ annas for boys, and 4 and 6 annas for women and men. In other words, boys are said to earn as little as Rs. 2-5-6, women as little as Rs. 6-4 and men Rs. 9-6 per month.

In the Public Works Department of the Government of Madras the minimum rate of wages is said to be 8 annas per diem or (for a 25-day month) Rs. 12-8 per mensem.

Employees in the Madras Electric Tramways and Supply Corporation commence, if they are women at 5 annas 9 pies per day, plus a grain allowance of 2 annas per day; and if they are men, at 7 annas 9 pies per day, plus a grain allowance of 2 annas. This applies presumably only to unskilled or coolie labour and the minimum monthly wages for labour of this class (including grain allowances) would therefore be :

	Rs.	A.	P.
Women	12	1	9
Men	15	3	9

Most of these latter wages represent those earned by the lowest paid industrial workers—the labourers engaged on

[1] *Royal Commission on Labour in India*, Evidence, vol. VII, part I, p. 283.
[2] ibid., p. 332.
[3] ibid., Evidence, vol. VII, part II, p. 120.

manual work which requires for its execution no great intelligence or skill. The Royal Commission Report points out that 'these fall roughly into two classes. There are a number of labourers regularly employed on manual work in factories and other industrial establishments. In the majority of provinces few men in this class are able to earn more than Rs. 15 a month regularly; the majority earn less and earnings are sometimes as low as Rs. 10. The other class consists of the large volume of unskilled labour engaged in various miscellaneous occupations on daily rates finding employment in industry either casually or for limited spells.'[1] The wages for this class while higher than those of the agricultural labourer in rural areas are, nevertheless, very low. In some areas in Madras, the United Provinces and the Central Provinces they are as low as 5 annas a day for men.

With reference to the large class of semi-skilled operatives in organized industry, the statistics relating to cases under the Workmen's Compensation Act[2] provide useful information. This information must, however, be used with caution as a means of judging wage levels in general, for it relates mainly to workers who have been the victims of serious accidents and it cannot be claimed that this proportionately small group represents 'an entirely representative section'.[3] 'The most highly-paid industrial employees who are engaged mainly in supervision, run less risk of accidents than others. At the other end of the scale, the unskilled worker runs less risk of an accident than a semi-skilled worker who is dealing with machine processes.'[4] Also, 'the act . . . is only gradually becoming known to the general mass of the workers, and it is probable that claims have been less frequent from the lower paid workers and their dependents than from those who are in receipt of higher wages'.[5] The Royal Commission considered, however, that these Workmen's Compensation Statistics give 'a general impression' of semi-skilled wage levels and quoted them for that purpose.

In the years 1925 to 1929, 'a period during which wage levels generally were fairly steady' there were in Madras

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, p. 203.

[2] The Act which follows the British model came into effect on 1st July 1924 and has since been twice amended, in 1926 (to make possible the ratification of an I.L.O. Convention) and in 1929.

[3] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, p. 204.

[4] ibid., p. 204.

[5] ibid., p. 204.

presidency a total of 110 cases dealt with under the Workmen's Compensation Act, and the following table gives the percentage of cases earning monthly wages of various grades :

Percentage of cases earning monthly wages of

Madras Presidency	1 Less than Rs. 13	2 Rs. 13 to Rs. 17/8	3 Rs. 17/8 to Rs 22/8	4 Rs. 22/8 to Rs. 27/8	5 Rs. 27/8 to Rs. 32/8	6 Not less than Rs. 32/8	Total
	22	25	19	15	4	15	100

Total number of cases 110.

It is to be noted that these statistics refer to the presidency of Madras. Wages in Madras city are normally a little higher than in other parts of the presidency. If these figures are to be taken as giving 'a general impression' of the wage levels current among industrial employees of the semi-skilled class, they go to show that approximately 67 per cent. of these workers are found in the under Rs. 22-8 per month classes. Allowing for the difference between presidency and city wage levels, this 'impression' may be said to be generally confirmed by the detailed wage rates quoted earlier in this chapter.

In connection with this question of the wages of semi-skilled labour, the following notes on the printing industry may be added as giving further insight into the economic conditions among semi-skilled workers.

The printing industry in Madras gives a considerable amount of employment and in many of the smaller establishments conditions are far from satisfactory. The Madras Printers' Labour Union has made the following statement with reference to wages in the printing trade : 'We start on a salary of Rs. 15 per mensem and our maximum is only Rs. 20. After 20 or 30 years of hard work and reliable service one may hope to get, as a foreman, only Rs. 25.'[1] This statement has no doubt been made in good faith, but conditions in this trade vary enormously and any generalizations about wages throughout the whole trade are likely to be misleading. These figures probably apply only to those sections of printing employees represented by the Union. Skilled

[1] *Royal Commission on Labour in India*, Evidence, vol. VII, part I, p. 339.

printers in well-run shops are known to earn much more than Rs. 20 and Rs. 25 per month, while, on the other hand, the writer has come across individual cases of employees in this trade who earn less than Rs. 15 per month. This statement is, however, worth quoting as an indication of some of the wage levels in what is a skilled or semi-skilled occupation. Small wonder is it that the Printers' Labour Union representatives remarked in their statement: 'We borrow and live.'

CHAPTER XII

FAMILY INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

In dealing with the question of industrial wages in the preceding chapter, the figures quoted represented the earnings of individuals. But 'in respect of both income and expenditure it is the family and not the individual that is important in relation to the standard of living'.[1] In many families the monthly income is derived not only from the earnings of the man of the house, but also from the earnings of the wife, of children, both juvenile and adult, and of other relatives (where the influence of the joint family system persists). In connection with a wages and family budget enquiry, conducted by the Government of Madras, at the request of the Royal Commission on Labour, it was found that among families of textile workers in the city (from whom 79 representative budgets were collected), not a single family was dependent entirely upon the earnings of one person. 53·2 per cent. of the families had two wage earners; 36·7 per cent. had three; 7·6 per cent. had four and 2·5 per cent. had five.[2] Similar budgets were collected from workers in the printing and bookbinding industry (50 families), where the distribution of wage earners was found to be as follows :[3]

One wage earner per family = 68 per cent.
Two wage earners per family = 32 per cent.

In the case of unskilled workers the wages of a single earner would normally be insufficient to maintain a household in the city, and supplementary sources of income are an absolute necessity to the maintenance of minimum standards of subsistence.

In order to achieve a realistic picture of poverty levels and standards of living it is necessary to augment the foregoing account of industrial earnings by an examination of representative family budgets.

Reliable information regarding family income and expenditure is very limited and exceedingly difficult to acquire. The

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India,* 1931, p. 204.
[2] *Royal Commission on Labour in India,* Evidence, vol. XI, part I, p. 13.
[3] ibid., p. 17.

greatest difficulty arises in connection with details of expenditure. Most families know the amount of the family income and if they do not regard the enquirer with undue suspicion are prepared to state it with a tolerable degree of accuracy. But the items of family expenditure are not so easily remembered. Few people keep accounts and the difficulty of recalling the items on which money is spent is not by any means confined to India or to the uneducated classes. Amongst the poorer people in India, however, the task of allaying the suspicion aroused by outside enquiries as to family means is extremely difficult, and the enquirer, even though he commands to a considerable degree the confidence of the people can never be quite certain that he is not being fooled and misled. It must be remembered, also, that almost the entire mass of industrial labour is illiterate and the importance of mathematical accuracy in these matters is not so obvious to the average working man in India as it is to the student of social problems. All information on family budgets must be read with these facts in mind.

Family Income

In order to give a general picture of working-class family income in Madras, two sets of budgets are employed :

(1) A series of budgets collected as a result of a Government enquiry into the standards of living of industrial workers in the city of Madras.[1] This enquiry was undertaken on behalf of the Royal Commission on Labour.

(2) The evidence presented to the Royal Commission by the Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway Company after an investigation into the family income and expenditure of various grades of employees on the railway.

(1) The Government enquiry was limited to employees (*a*) in the printing and bookbinding industry (Government Press; Hoe & Co., and the Methodist Press), and (*b*) in the textile industry (Madras United Spinning and Weaving Mills Co., Ltd., Choolai; the Buckingham Mill and the Carnatic Mill).

In the printing and bookbinding industry fifty budgets were analysed.[2] The analysis is on the broadest possible lines and is deficient in detail at many critical points.

Forty-eight of the budgets were from Hindu families. Two were from Christian families. There were no budgets

[1] *Royal Commission on Labour in India*, Evidence, vol. XI, part I, p. 10.
[2] ibid., pp. 16-18.

collected from Muhammedans. The Hindu castes were represented as follows :

Brahmans	2
Caste Hindus	43
Adi-Dravidas	3
	48

The preponderance of Caste Hindus may suggest that the budgets are mainly those of artisans rather than labourers, though there is no information on this point. In the absence of such information hasty conclusions as to the economic significance of caste are unwise. The old occupational significance of caste has largely disappeared in the city, except in so far as the heavier forms of manual labour and the more disagreeable occupations (e.g. scavenging) are still to a considerable extent a monopoly of the Adi-Dravida and other 'untouchable' communities. It should be emphasized, however, that caste cannot be taken as giving any clue whatever to economic position. There are today many instances of wealthy Adi-Dravidas and poverty-stricken Brahmans.

The income groups amongst the printing and bookbinding families were distributed as follows :

Income Groups	No. of families	Per cent. of total	Total Income			Average Income			Average No. in family (including children)
			RS	A	P	RS	A	P	
Below Rs. 20 p.m.	7	14	118	14	0	16	15	9	4·14
Rs. 20–Rs. 30 ,,	20	40	512	12	0	25	10	2	4·75
Rs. 30–Rs. 40 ,,	10	20	340	3	0	34	0	4	5·40
Over Rs. 40 ,,	13	26	613	2	0	47	2	7	5·39

These figures, general as they are, throw some light on the facts of poverty in Madras. Families of an average of four persons are faced with the task of living on an average income of less than Rs. 17 per month (in English currency, approximately 25 shillings and 8 pence) or roughly six shillings and five pence a week! And at the other end of the scale, the more favoured workers with families averaging five or more persons earn an average family income of Rs. 47

per month (£3/10/8) or roughly 17 shillings and 8 pence per week.

According to the figures of family expenditure collected from the same persons, in every income group the average expenditure exceeded the average income.

Income Groups	Average Income	Average Expenditure	Average Deficiency of Income
	RS A P	RS A P	RS A P
Below Rs. 20	16 15 9	21 4 3	4 4 6
Rs. 20–30	25 10 2	29 14 2	4 4 0
Rs. 30–40	34 0 4	40 1 6	6 1 2
Over Rs. 40	47 2 7	49 9 5	2 6 10

Indebtedness is, therefore, practically universal amongst these families, but we shall deal with the whole question in detail later.

The textile workers' budgets collected for the Government enquiry totalled 79 and represented families belonging to the following castes and communities :

Caste Hindus	38	Hindus 87·35 per cent. of total
Adi-Dravidas	31	
Muhammedans	6	7·59 ,,
Christians	4	5·06 ,,

The income groups were distributed as follows :

Income Groups	No. of families	Per cent. of total	Total Income	Average	Average No. in family (including children)
			RS A P	RS A P	
Below Rs. 20	6	7·6	98 12 0	16 7 4	4·33
Rs. 20–30	26	32·9	662 12 0	25 7 10	4·88
Rs. 30–40	24	30·4	837 2 0	34 14 1	6·08
Over Rs. 40	23	29·1	1,068 13 0	46 7 6	7·22
			2,667 7 0	33 12 3	5·88

A comparison of the average family income with the average family expenditure indicates that these textile workers are

on the whole more provident or more fortunate than the printing and bookbinding employees.

Income Groups	Average Income	Average Expenditure	Average Deficiency (or otherwise) of Income
	RS A P	RS A P	RS A P
Below Rs. 20	16 7 4	18 5 6	− 1 14 2
Rs. 20–30	25 7 10	25 15 6	− 0 7 8
Rs. 30–40	34 14 1	32 12 10	+ 2 1 3
Over Rs. 40	46 7 6	43 9 6	+ 2 14 0

These figures seem to point to the conclusion that among textile workers the families in receipt of the lowest incomes are most likely to be involved in the heaviest debt. That would appear to be a logical deduction, but it does not in fact normally happen so, as we shall see from some later budget figures. Indebtedness often seems to have little relation to income and it would be unwise to draw hasty general conclusions from the above table. The figures quoted are averages and the fact that, on the average, the families in income groups over Rs. 30 per month appear to live on a basis of solvency does not justify any general conclusion as to the economic conditions of the individual families. The apparently more favourable position of the textile workers as compared with the printers is more apparent than real as is shown by the following statement in the report on the enquiry. 'Indebtedness appears to be very high, 96 per cent. of the total number of families in the printing trade and 87·35 per cent. in the textile industry being indebted to some degree or other.'[1] Out of the total of 79 textile families from whom budgets were collected, 10 were not in debt, while out of the 50 printers' families 2 were not in debt.

Another point of interest and importance is the fact that while the textile workers live mainly on the outskirts of the city, the printers, whose budgets were analysed, lived mainly in the more central and congested areas. This fact has a distinct bearing on costs and standards of living. Families living in congested areas pay, as a rule, much larger rentals for their dwellings than those who live in the almost rural

[1] *Royal Commission on Labour in India,* Evidence, vol. XI, part I, p. 12.

surroundings of the city's outskirts. A larger proportion of expenditure on rent means inevitably (among people whose incomes are at best very little above mere subsistence levels) a reduction in the proportion of expenditure on food. This, in fact, proved to be the case in the budgets we are considering. The following comparative figures[1] for the textile workers' and the printers' budgets show their respective percentages of expenditure on food and on rent :

	Average percentage of expenditure on food (all income groups)	*Average percentage of expenditure on rent (all income groups)*
Textile workers ...	60·71	8·29
Printing employees ...	55·24	13·08

This difference may account for the slightly more favourable position of the textile workers in respect of indebtedness.

(2) The enquiry conducted by the Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway Company in 1930 into income and expenditure among representative families of their employees, if restricted in its range (only 40 sample budgets were analysed) was thorough in method. Unfortunately for the immediate purpose of this thesis, these budgets were collected not only in Madras, but over the whole area of the railway's operations, which is fairly extensive. They represent, as a whole, therefore, the economic conditions of the lower grades of railway employees in the north and west of Madras Presidency. They are, however, of special value because of the thoroughness with which details of family expenditure were analysed, though on the side of income with which we are concerned in this section of the Chapter, the fact must be borne in mind that they represent *mofussal* as well as city budgets and that wages in the city are normally a little higher than in other parts of the Presidency. This higher average level of wages is, however, at least balanced by the higher cost of living. The railway investigators claim that their income figures are 'fairly accurate'[2] as the Company knew the salaries paid to their employees. There is no specific reference in the report to subsidiary sources of income,

[1] *Royal Commission on Labour in India,* Evidence, vol. XI, part I, pp. 15 and 18.
[2] ibid., p. 283.

but since the constitution of each family was ascertained it is probable that full account was taken of this important factor in family income in India.

Expenditure was checked by the careful examination of witnesses and it is claimed that the details are 'as nearly accurate as it is possible to obtain them in the short time available for this enquiry'.[1]

No budget was analysed which represented an income of more than Rs. 50 per month, and the income groupings, which were similar to those adopted for the Government enquiry, were as follows :

(1) Rs. 20 and under per month.
(2) Above Rs. 20 and below Rs. 30 per month.
(3) Above Rs. 30 and below Rs. 40 per month.
(4) Above Rs. 40 and below Rs. 50 per month.

A summary of the main results under these four groups is given below.

Sample Family Budgets of Employees of the M. & S.M. Railway Company, Madras

1 Serial Nos.	2 Employment	3 No. of persons (adult) in family	4 No. of children	5 Income p.m.	6 Average Expenditure p.m.	7 Balance of Income and Expenditure
	A. Incomes under Rs. 20					
				RS A P	RS A P	RS A P
1	Water Coolie ...	3	3	13 8 0	18 2 8	− 4 10 8
2	Coolie ...	1	5	13 8 0	20 15 0	− 7 7 0
3	Do. ...	3	3	15 0 0	36 14 0	− 21 14 0
4	Watchman ...	2	4	16 8 0	29 10 0	− 13 2 0
5	Peon ...	3	2	16 8 0	24 13 6	− 8 5 6
6	Coolie ...	1	3	17 0 0	19 8 0	− 2 8 0
7	Peon ...	2	2	17 8 0	21 12 0	− 4 4 0
8	Gangman ...	2	4	17 12 0	20 2 0	− 2 6 0
9	Coolie ...	2	3	17 12 0	27 0 0	− 9 4 0
10	Do. ...	5	2	19 0 0	30 6 0	− 11 6 0
	Average, based on 10 budgets ...	2·4	3·3	16 6 5	24 14 8	− 8 8 3

[1] *Royal Commission on Labour in India*, Evidence, vol. XI, part I, p. 283.

1 Serial Nos.	2 Employment	3 No. of persons (adult) in family	4 No. of children	5 Income p.m.			6 Average Expenditure p.m.			7 Balance of Income and Expenditure		
	B. *Incomes above Rs. 20 and under Rs. 30*											
				RS	A	P	RS	A	P	RS	A	P
11	Carpenter ...	2	4	21	0	0	23	9	6	− 2	9	6
12	Peon ...	2	4	21	8	0	29	4	6	− 7	12	6
13	Loco-Coolie ...	2	2	21	12	0	26	5	6	− 4	9	6
14	Hammerman ...	2	5	22	0	0	25	4	0	− 3	4	0
15	Pointsman ...	3	3	22	8	0	24	4	0	− 1	12	0
16	Yard Coolie ...	4	3	24	4	0	27	11	0	− 3	7	0
17	Peon ...	3	3	26	0	0	34	0	0	− 8	0	0
18	Watchman ..	3	2	26	7	0	28	6	6	− 1	15	6
19	Fitter ...	2	0	28	0	0	32	7	0	− 4	7	0
20	Do. ...	3	2	29	6	0	29	6	0	Nil		
	Average, based on 10 budgets ...	2·6	2·8	24	6	6	28	0	7	− 3	12	1
	C. *Incomes above Rs. 30 and under Rs. 40*											
21	Fitter ...	3	4	30	0	0	32	4	2	− 2	4	2
22	Wireman ...	5	0	31	0	0	42	4	0	−11	4	0
23	Watchman ...	3	5	31	8	0	44	12	0	−13	4	0
24	Fitter ...	5	3	32	10	0	35	9	6	− 2	15	6
25	Shuntingmaster ...	3	2	35	0	0	34	11	6	+ 0	4	6
26	Do. ...	2	6	37	0	0	43	3	6	− 6	3	6
27	Workman ...	3	3	38	0	0	45	11	0	− 7	11	0
28	Fitter ...	4	3	38	0	0	41	8	6	− 3	8	6
29	Do. ...	4	5	39	0	0	47	8	0	− 8	8	0
30	Blacksmith ...	3	3	39	4	0	59	15	6	−20	11	6
	Average, based on 10 budgets ...	3·5	3·5	35	2	0	42	11	9	− 7	9	9
	D. *Incomes above Rs. 40 and under Rs. 50*											
31	Turner ...	4	2	42	4	0	57	5	0	−15	1	0
32	Coolie ...	7	2	43	0	0	57	11	0	−14	11	0
33	Compounder ..	5	3	45	0	0	54	13	0	− 9	13	0
34	Fitter ...	2	2	45	0	0	45	9	7	− 0	9	7
35	Do. ...	4	2	45	8	0	45	8	0	Nil		
36	Turner ..	3	1	45	8	0	45	8	4	− 0	0	4
37	Fitter ...	3	1	45	8	0	45	8	0	Nil		
38	Workman ...	5	3	49	0	0	68	7	0	−19	7	0
39	Turner ...	3	2	49	8	0	49	8	0	Nil		
40	Fitter ...	5	3	50	0	0	50	0	0	Nil		
	Average, based on 10 budgets ...	4·1	2·1	46	0	5	51	15	8	− 5	15	3

The most striking feature about these budgets (as of the 'Government enquiry' budgets) is the all but universal excess of expenditure over income. Of the 40 families concerned in this investigation, 34 declared that their monthly expenditure exceeded their income—in most cases by quite considerable amounts. In the case of budget number 3, for example, a coolie earning Rs. 15 per month gave his monthly expenditure as Rs. 36-14-0—more than double his income. This is an extreme example of overspending, and the accuracy of the expenditure figures may be questioned.[1] But it is of great significance that only 6 families (out of 40) claimed ability to balance their monthly budgets, and only one of those six qualifies for the happiness (described by Mr. Micawber) of the man whose expenses are just under his income (Budget No. 25).

Family Expenditure

Further light is thrown on the standards of living among the poorer classes by an examination of the details of family expenditure and the relative amounts spent on various items and especially on necessities.

1. The report on the Government enquiry into wages and family budgets in the Textile Industry and the Printing and Bookbinding trade[2] contained only the summarized results of the investigations into family expenditure. But percentages of expenditure on various items in the budgets are provided and are of value in showing the relative proportions of expenditure on food, clothing, rent and other such vital necessities and the miscellaneous items which are of secondary necessity.

Among the various income groups in the textile workers'

[1] Especially in view of the fact that this man acknowledged that his total debt was only Rs. 160, for which he was paying interest at the rate of 75 per cent. per annum. (See Evidence, vol. XI, part I, p. 288.) It is possible that his expenditure figures represented what he would have liked them to be rather than what they actually were!

[2] *Royal Commission on Labour in India,* Evidence, vol. XI, part I, pp. 10-19.

enquiry the following proportions of expenditure v returned :

TEXTILE WORKERS
Monthly family expenditure

—	Below Rs. 20 p.m.	Rs. 20–30 p.m.	Rs. 30–40 p.m.	Rs. 40 and above p.m.	All incomes
No. of budgets	*6*	*26*	*24*	*23*	*79*
Expenditure on :—	%	%	%	%	%
1. Food ...	65·42	61·82	60·25	58·42	60·71
2. Clothing ...	3·18	3·87	4·05	3·94	3·84
3. Rent ...	8·86	8·44	5·43	10·12	8·29
4. Fuel and Lighting ...	9·65	7·86	7·53	6·46	7·54
5. Household requisites ...	0·34	0·32	0·27	0·26	0·29
6. Miscellaneous.	12·55	17·69	22·47	20·80	19·33
Total ...	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00

The corresponding figures for the printing and bookbinding trade were as follows :

PRINTING AND BOOKBINDING EMPLOYEES
Monthly family expenditure

—	Below Rs. 20 p.m.	Rs. 20–30 p.m.	Rs. 30–40 p.m.	Rs. 40 and above p.m.	All incomes
No. of Budgets	*7*	*20*	*10*	*13*	*50*
Expenditure on :—	%	%	%	%	%
1. Food ...	56·07	54·20	56·39	54·57	55·24
2. Clothing ...	3·70	3·78	4·74	5·08	4·50
3. Rent ...	13·10	15·48	13·34	11·41	13·08
4. Fuel and Lighting ...	8·74	7·42	8·03	6·90	7·61
5. Household Requisites..	0·42	0·54	0·60	0·51	0·52
6. Miscellaneous.	17·97	18·58	16·90	21·53	19·05
Total ...	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00

Reference has already been made to the fact that the [te]xtile workers' families lived mainly in outlying parts of [the] city while those of the printers and bookbinders lived in [m]ore central and congested areas. The main differences in [t]he distribution of expenditure between these two sets of figures is probably accounted for by the location of their respective homes. The difference in the proportional expenditure on food and rent is very marked; those living in the crowded areas allotting a higher proportion of their budgets to rent, to the detriment of their expenditure on food.

In the average figures for all incomes (final column) there are no other marked differences. But it is to be noted that in the two lower income groups (i.e. (1) under Rs. 20, and (2) Between Rs. 20 and Rs. 30) there is a greater proportion of expenditure on miscellaneous items among the printers and bookbinders than among the textile workers. This is specially marked in the under Rs. 20 group. Inferences from this fact must needs be drawn with caution, not only because of the general uncertainty with regard to all Indian family budget figures, but because the Government report gives no indication of the items included under the term 'miscellaneous'. The larger proportionate expenditure on 'miscellaneous' items by the printers *may* indicate that the needs of those workers who live in the heart of the city are more sophisticated than those of the working-class residents in the semi-rural outskirts.

Another interesting difference as between the textile workers' and the printers' budgets is that while the former conform with fair consistency to Engel's law, the latter do not do so. Engel's law 'is to the effect that as income increases, the expenditure on different items of the budget have changing proportions and that the proportions devoted to the more urgent needs (such as food) decrease, while those devoted to luxuries and semi-luxuries increase'.[1] This law has been reformulated by Messrs. R. G. D. Allen & A. L. Bowley on the basis of their recent investigations into family expenditure, and given a more precise form as follows:

> In a homogeneous group of families differing only in respect of income, the excess over (or defect from) the average of expenditures on any budget item bears a constant proportion to the excess over (or defect from) the average income. In the case

[1] R. G. D. Allen & A. L. Bowley, *Family Expenditure* (P. S. King & Son), 1935, p. 7.

of some goods which may be described as *necessaries*, the rule results in a diminishing proportion of expenditure as income rises. In the case of other goods which may be described as *luxuries*, the proportion of expenditure rises.

In the case of the textile workers' budgets it will be seen that there is a progressive decline in the proportion of expenditure on food as income rises. Under the item 'clothing' the same rule does not apply. But it is to be remembered that in the climatic conditions of Madras clothing is not a 'necessity' so vital as in more temperate climates. Below a certain income level and in certain occupations the amount of clothing that is absolutely necessary is very limited—a 'dhoti' or 'veshti' (loin cloth) and head cloth is the normal dress. This would apply in the case of most of the low income groups under consideration. The wearing of more elaborate clothing (such as a shirt and coat) may be regarded as a social necessity (a matter of prestige), but it cannot be regarded as an absolute physical necessity. The proportion of expenditure on clothing tends to rise as income increases and is not a 'fixed' item in the sense that food is, even in a 'homogeneous group of families'. For the purposes of Engel's law the clothing worn over and above the common minimum must be regarded as belonging to the category of 'luxuries'.

On the other hand, rent and such items as fuel and lighting and household requisites are more or less fixed, and in the case of these items Engel's law seems to operate in the textile workers' budgets, with one exception. The exception is the proportion of income spent on rent by families in the 'over Rs. 40' income group. If these figures are reliable, the large increase in the proportionate expenditure on this item by the more highly paid textile workers is probably accounted for by a difference in the type of dwelling which they occupy.

In the case of the printing and bookbinding employees' budgets, the proportionate expenditure on different items seems to have no precise relation to the increases in income. The results shown in the tables are almost certainly affected by the limited number of budgets upon which they are based.

A higher income per family in any given occupational group may be due:

(1) to a more skilled type of work being done by the chief wage-earner;

(2) to a larger number of wage-earners in the family; and/or

(3) in certain occupations, giving steady employment and regular increments of pay, to a higher average age of the chief breadwinner.

These variable factors make it difficult to deduce reliable results from such a table as is here provided.

2. The Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway Company's budget enquiry[1] elicited from the railway employees of the lower grades a great deal of detailed information on family expenditure. The following abstract of the percentages of expenditure on various budget items has been made from the detailed figures, for the purposes of comparison with the tables given for textile workers and printing employees.

RAILWAY EMPLOYEES (M. & S. M. RAILWAY)

Monthly family expenditure

—	Below Rs. 20 p.m.	Rs. 20–30 p.m.	Rs. 30-40 p.m.	Rs. 40–50 p.m.
No. of Budgets	*10*	*10*	*10*	*10*
Expenditure on :—	%	%	%	%
1. Food ...	70·35	63·24	61·18	58·17
2. Clothing ...	5·52	7·82	5·71	8·08
3. Rent ...	5·78	8·26	8·48	8·23
4. Fuel and Lighting ...	8·80	9·00	7·46	8·23
5. Household Requisites ...	·25	·29	·33	·59
6. Miscellaneous ...	9·30	11·39	16·84	16·70
Total ...	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00

It will be noted that in these budgets Engel's law operates in respect of expenditure on food, the proportion of such expenditure showing an even decline as income increases.

[1] *Royal Commission on Labour in India*, Evidence, vol. XI, part I, pp. 286-99.

The law operates conversely in respect of expenditure on household requisites (and less convincingly in the miscellaneous column) where there is a proportionate rise in expenditure as income increases. The same rule does not apply consistently to any other item in the budgets. The proportionate expenditure on clothing tends to fluctuate from income group to income group. The proportionate expenditure on rent rises sharply from the 'Below Rs. 20' group to the 'Rs. 20 to Rs. 30' group, and for the three higher groups remains fairly stable.[1] The fuel and lighting expenditure fluctuates slightly within a limited range.

It would be unwise to attempt to formulate any definite conclusions as to the validity, in Indian conditions, of Engel's law, on the basis of such budget figures as have been examined in this chapter. The range of income levels is too limited and the maximum income included in these tables is relatively low. To speak of 'luxuries' in connection with the budgets of people whose standards of living are so low is both unreal and misleading. The margin between what is 'necessary' and what is not, is almost impossible to define at these levels, where many necessities (e.g. in diet) are denied.

The textile workers' and railway employees' budgets do, however, in respect of expenditure on food, sustain Engel's theory.

Before leaving the question of family expenditure, it is interesting, because of the light it throws on standards of living and poverty, to examine the expenditure on the various items grouped under 'miscellaneous' in the M. & S.M. Railway tables.

The average monthly expenditure per family, over the whole range of income groups, on various miscellaneous items was as follows:

		Approximately Rs.	A.	P.
1.	Remittances to dependents in village ...	0	1	2
2.	Travelling	0	1	5
3.	Medicine	0	2	2
4.	Drink and drugs	0	0	6
5.	Tobacco and *pan supari*	0	8	3

[1] *N.B.*—These budgets are not all Madras city budgets. It is interesting in this connection to compare expenditure on rent in these railway budgets with that shown in the exclusively city budgets collected in the Government enquiry.

		Approximately Rs.	A.	P.
6.	Religious ceremonies, etc. ...	0	5	3
7.	Provident Fund, Trade Union or Co-operative Society	1	7	7
8.	Amusements	0	0	½[1]
9.	Education	0	2	7
10.	Interest on debt	0	8	6
11.	Dhoby, Barber and Sweeper ...	1	8	2

These figures represent the average expenditure of forty families on these items (according to the computation of the head of each family). This cautionary parenthesis is important as the figures were given to the employers' representatives. It is necessary to allow, on the one hand, for some possible exaggeration in the amounts returned under expenditure for vital necessities such as food and rent, and, on the other hand, it is possible (and indeed probable) that under-estimates were given for expenditure on some of these miscellaneous items. Drink and drugs, for example, are represented by a very low figure—6 pies per month per family. The consumption of toddy and other intoxicating liquors is known to be fairly general amongst the labouring classes, and this is probably a very much under-estimated figure. Of the 40 families considered only three admitted any expenditure on drink or drugs at all. This fact is probably accounted for by the not-unnatural desire of most of the employees to impress their employers with their sobriety and temperate habits. Incidentally, there is a strong religious sentiment in India against the use of alcoholic liquors and though this produces little effect on the habits of the labouring classes, it does result in a tendency on the part of those who drink to be rather shamefaced about the habit, and an unwillingness to acknowledge it.

The highest single items of expenditure in the list are on the Dhoby, Barber and Sweeper (Re. 1-8-2 per month) and Provident Fund, Trade Union and Co-operative Society Contributions (Re. 1-7-7 per month). Both these items must be considered as 'necessaries'.

The next highest item is 'Interest on debt', which absorbs on an average 8 annas 6 pies per family per month. Tobacco and *pan supari* is the only item on the list which might be considered a 'luxury' to which any considerable

[1] $\frac{1}{24}$ of an anna (or $\frac{1}{24}$ of a penny).

proportion of expenditure goes. And 8 annas 3 pies per family does not suggest extravagance. Religious ceremonies absorb on the average 5 annas 3 pies per month and the amounts spent on the other items are almost negligible. The most pathetic entry of half a pie (or $\frac{1}{24}$ of a penny) per family per month for 'amusements' is some indication of the narrowly circumscribed life that is led by the poorer Indian family. Of the 40 families, whose budgets were analysed in this enquiry, 39 returned their expenditure on 'amusements' as *nil*, while one family, in receipt of the relatively high income of Rs. 38 per month acknowledged an expenditure of 2 annas per month on 'amusements'.[1]

There is no need to dwell upon or to emphasize the general poverty disclosed by this brief account of family income and expenditure. The facts tell their own tale, and it is not a pleasant tale.

Some observers prefer to dwell on the mitigations of the situation, on a comparison of the worker's existing privations with the hardships which forced him into industrial (or urban) life, on his scanty knowledge of better things, on the endurance and courage which enable him to tolerate his present condition, and, indeed, to extract some pleasure from it, and even on his general inertia and lack of desire for improvement. These also are facts and must be faced, but it is mainly ignorance of his own relative position and lack of belief in the possibility of bettering it which are responsible for his apathy. We rejoice at the evident signs of the awakening of the general conscience which greater knowledge and the ferment of thought in India are combining to produce, and the progress already visible should hearten all those who believe in the possibility of advance. It is on the growth of the will to progress in the community generally, in those responsible for government and for the control of industry, and in the workers themselves that the hope of the future lies.[2]

[1] Where there is expenditure on amusements it almost certainly means an occasional visit to the picture houses where prices are graded from 2 annas upwards.

[2] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India,* 1931, pp. 207-8.

CHAPTER XIII

DEBT

THE most striking feature of the family budgets examined in the preceding chapter, apart from the general conditions of extreme poverty which they disclose, is the high percentage of cases in which the monthly expenditure was stated to exceed the monthly income. The Royal Commission on Labour rightly remarked that 'among the causes responsible for the low standard of living of the worker indebtedness must be given a high place'.[1] Among the poorer classes of the community in India indebtedness is almost universal and it is undoubtedly one of the major curses of Indian life. Debt hampers efficiency and kills initiative. It reduces the purchasing power of the masses. It involves multitudes in the most acute hardship and distress. Debts are handed down from generation to generation. Many are born in debt and when they in turn die they hand on the debt, usually with interest, to their children. Sons are bound to their fathers' debts by the triple chain of caste, custom and character, but not by law. 'It evokes both admiration and regret to find how commonly a son assumes responsibility for his father's debt, an obligation which rests on religious and social, but seldom on legal, sanctions.'[2]

Indebtedness is not a specifically urban problem, but the problem in the towns and industrial areas presents features which distinguish it from rural indebtedness. It is in the town that both the rapacity of the money-lender and the credulity and short-sightedness of his victims are often seen at their worst.

The agriculturist in rural areas normally seeks short-term loans for the purchasing of seed etc., and given a good monsoon and a good harvest is in a position to meet his liabilities

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India,* 1931, p. 224.
[2] ibid., p. 224.

when the produce is sold. Many agricultural debts are, in fact, paid in kind. The agriculturist is frequently able to offer security, and he is also relatively immobile, being tied to the village in which his land is situated.

The urban worker, on the other hand, seldom seeks a short term loan. 'Practically none of the borrowing of industrial workers is of this character.'[1] Nor can the poorer classes in the city offer security comparable to that of the farmer. Some may possess a few tawdry jewels, but in the main the city worker has to depend upon his future earning capacity alone to enable him to repay any debt incurred. Again, the city-dweller is much more mobile than the village agriculturist and his mobility makes him 'an unsound proposition from the moneylender's point of view'.[2] 'A debtor who is not a permanent resident of the area where the money-lender carries on business, who cannot offer security, and who is not likely to obtain any increase in income as the result of his borrowing, is in every way an unsound proposition. It is not surprising, therefore, that the industrial worker should have to pay particularly high rates of interest.'[3]

Frequently families come to the city or to industry because they are in debt and in most cases the debts remain and fresh obligations are incurred. On arrival in the city there are no resources upon which to draw before the first pay day comes round. It takes at least four weeks before any wages can be drawn, and sheer necessity forces the migrant into the hands of the money-lender almost at once. He either goes direct to a Marwari, who because of the lack of security extorts an exorbitant rate of interest, or to a tradesman from whom he seeks goods on credit. The result in either case is a heritage of debt which cripples the family from the very beginning of its life in the city.

In the report of the evidence given in Madras to the Royal Commission on Labour on the subject of indebtedness, there is a tragic monotony in the statements made by both employers' and employees' representatives.

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 227.
[2] ibid., p. 227.
[3] ibid., p. 227.

Messrs. Binny & Co., the managing agents of the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills, made the following statement in their written evidence :

'The habit of borrowing money seems to be ingrained in the labouring classes in India. We believe that a large proportion of our workpeople are in debt, but not more so than in any other similar grade of life.'[1]

The Madras Labour Union declared that they had made 'enquiries from about 400 workers . . . and found that without exception they were all in debt. The amounts ranged from Rs. 10 to Rs. 400.'[2]

The Madras United Spinning and Weaving Mills Company asserted that most of their workers were in debt and attributed the fact to 'their spendthrift habits, especially in drinks etc.'[3] The Madras Aluminium Labour Union representatives said : 'Almost all the labourers are involved in debts, ranging from Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 20. They are in the clutches of Marwadies, who lend sums at exorbitant rates of interest.'[4]

It is clear that the working-class population of Madras is involved in a state of chronic indebtedness. The Royal Commission estimated that 'in most industrial centres, the proportion of families or individuals who are in debt is not less than two-thirds of the whole.'[5]

It is important, therefore, that this question of indebtedness should be considered in some detail, as it bears on conditions in Madras city.

The Extent of Indebtedness

The family budgets examined in the preceding chapter provide some information on the extent of indebtedness amongst these families.

1. The Government enquiry elicited information on the subject from textile workers and printing and bookbinding workers.

[1] *Royal Commission on Labour in India*, Evidence, vol. VII, part I, p. 149.
[2] ibid., vol. VII, part I, p. 174.
[3] ibid., vol. VII, part I, p. 280.
[4] ibid., vol. VII, part I, p. 286.
[5] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 224.

Amongst the textile workers (79 budgets) a total of 69 families, or 87·35 per cent., were found to be in debt, while 10 families, or 12·65 per cent. were not indebted at the time of enquiry. The extent of this indebtedness is indicated in the following table:

TEXTILE WORKERS

Indebtedness[1]

Income groups	No. of families not in debt	No. of families indebted: Under 3 months' pay	3 to 6 months' pay	6 to 12 months' pay	12 to 18 months' pay	Over 18 months' pay	Total No. of families in debt	Total (indebted and not indebted)	Per cent. of indebtedness to total number of families
Per month									
Below Rs. 20 ...	...	2	3	...	...	1	6	6	100%
Rs. 20–30 ...	5	11	7	3	...	...	21	26	80·77%
Rs. 30–40 ...	1	13	6	3	1	...	23	24	95·83%
Rs. 40 and over ...	4	10	5	4	...	...	19	23	82·61%
All income groups ...	10	36	21	10	1	1	69	79	...
Per cent. of total No. indebted.	12·65	45·57	26·59	12·65	1·27	1·27	87·35	100·00	...

In the case of the printing and bookbinding budgets there was an even higher percentage of general indebtedness. Forty-eight out of fifty families were found to be in debt.

[1] *Royal Commission on Labour in India,* Evidence, vol. XI, part I, p. 15.

The extent of their indebtedness is shown in the table which follows :

PRINTING AND BOOKBINDING EMPLOYEES

Indebtedness[1]

Income groups	No. of families not in debt	No. of families indebted: Under 3 months' pay	3 to 6 months' pay	6 to 12 months' pay	12 to 18 months' pay	Over 18 months' pay	Total indebted	Total (indebted and not indebted)	Per cent. of indebted to total No. of families
Per month									
Below Rs. 20 ...	...	3	4	...	...	...	7	7	100
Rs. 20–30 ...	...	8	2	10	...	...	20	20	100
Rs. 30–40 ...	...	1	6	3	...	...	10	10	100
Rs. 40 and over ...	2	3	4	4	..	...	11	13	64·61
All income groups ...	2	15	16	17	...	...	48	50	...
Per cent. of total No. in debt...	4%	30%	32%	34%	...	...	96%	100%	...

2. A more detailed analysis of the facts of indebtedness amongst railway employees was made in the M. & S. M. Railway Inquiry and the details which were subsequently published are worth quoting, in view of the light which they

[1] *Royal Commission on Labour in India*, Evidence, vol. XI, part I, p. 19.

throw on the question, especially in relation to rates of interest, security and terms of repayment :

Railway Employees

Indebtedness

No. of budget	*Income p. m.* RS	A	P	*Debt* RS	*Cause*	*Rate of interest*	*Security*	*Terms of repayment*
1	13	8	0	60	Repayment of debts	24%	nil.	Instalments
2	13	8	0	100	,,	12%	Pro note	Instalments
3	15	0	0	160	,,	75%	nil.	Instalments
4	16	8	0	250	Marriage and debts	75%	Pro note	Instalments
5	16	8	0	250	Repayment of debts	48%	Jewels	Instalments
6	17	0	0	30	,,	nil.	nil.	......
7	17	8	0	50	,,	150%	Surety	Instalments
8	17	12	0	30	,,	150%	nil.	Rs. 3-12-0 p. m.
9	17	12	0	200	Marriage and debts	12% and 75%	nil.	Instalments
10	19	0	0	200	,,	$18\frac{3}{4}$%	Pro note	Instalments
11	21	0	0	150	,,	18%	nil.	Instalments
12	21	8	0	100	Debts	nil.	nil.	Instalments
13	21	12	0	150	Misc. debts	12%	Pro note	Instalments
14	22	0	0	40	,,	nil.	nil.	When possible
15	22	8	0	22	,,	150%	nil.	When possible
16	24	4	0	40	,,	nil.	nil.	When possible
17	26	0	0	90	,,	$32\frac{1}{2}$%	Jewels	When possible
18	26	7	0	30	,,	75%	nil.	When possible
19	28	0	0	300	,,	$37\frac{1}{2}$%	nil.	When possible
20	29	6	0	nil.	nil.	nil.	nil.	......
21	30	0	0	40	Repayment of debts	$37\frac{1}{2}$%	Jewels	Instalments
22	31	0	0	300	Marriage and debts	37%	,,	Instalments
23	31	8	0	250	,,	75%	Pro note	Pays interest
24	32	10	0	50	Repayment of debts	nil.	nil.	Instalments
25	35	0	0	nil.	nil.	nil.	nil.	......
26	37	0	0	120	Repayment of debts	$37\frac{1}{2}$%	nil.	Instalments
27	38	0	0	197	,,	75%	nil.	Instalments
28	38	0	0	50	,,	75%	Personal	Instalments
29	39	0	0	150	,,	75%	nil.	When possible
30	39	4	0	444	,,	18%	nil.	Instalments
31	42	4	0	300	,,	20%	nil.	Instalments
32	43	0	0	350	Marriage and debts	36%	Pro note	Instalments
33	45	0	0	120	,,	24%	,,	Instalments
34	45	0	0	151	,,	nil.	nil.	Instalments

RAILWAY EMPLOYEES

Indebtedness—(*contd.*)

No. of budget	*Income p.m.*	*Debt*	*Cause*	*Rate of interest*	*Security*	*Terms of repayment*
	RS A P	RS				
35	45 8 0	nil.	nil.	nil.	nil.	......
36	45 8 0	150	Repayment of debts	75%	nil.	Instalments
37	45 8 0	nil.	nil	nil.	nil.	......
38	49 0 0	100	Repayment of debts	15%	Jewels	Instalments
39	49 8 0	nil.	nil.	nil.	nil.	......
40	50 0 0	nil.	nil.	nil.	nil.	......

It will be noted at once that the amounts of debt in a great many cases are very high in relation to the monthly income received. There is evidence to show that 'the level of indebtedness in terms of wages is higher among railway servants than among industrial employees as a whole.'[1] The main reason for this lies in the fact that under the Civil Procedure Code, the money-lender may secure the attachment of the wages of certain classes of employees, and in respect of some, 'particularly railway servants and the servants of local authorities',[2] the law allows the money-lender to secure an order directing the employer to hand over monthly a large part of an indebted employee's salary, 'until the whole decree has been covered, a period which extends in some cases to years rather than months.'[3]

In these circumstances the railway employee is in a position to secure a larger amount of credit from the money-lender than many other borrowers could command, and it is to be noted that of the 34 debtors whose cases are detailed above only 14 had borrowed on some form of security. The other twenty were given loans without any security. Further, the repayments are in most cases to be made 'by instalments'.

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, p. 231.
[2] ibid., p. 231.
[3] ibid.

The average amount of debt is thus higher than would be the case amongst other classes of the same earning capacity. Among the thirty-four debtors, the average debt is approximately Rs. 147-12-2. The lowest amount of debt recorded was Rs. 22 and the highest Rs. 444. In some cases (e.g. Budgets 4 and 5) the total amount of the debt exceeds fifteen months' salary.

The rates of interest charged may be taken as fairly representative. They range from 12 per cent. per annum to 150 per cent. per annum. Even the minimum rate, which applies in only two cases, is high and in a great number of cases the rate of interest is such as to render almost impossible the repayment of the capital sum. A very common rate in Madras (as elsewhere in India) is 'one anna in the rupee'—an anna per month interest on every rupee borrowed. Apart from compound interest, this works out at 75 per cent. per annum. It is not surprising that 'actual payments are seldom on the scale which strict fulfilment of the terms of the loan would require'.[1] The fact is that 'the prompt repayment of the capital is not usually desired by the money-lender; he prefers to remain a creditor and receive interest, and in most cases he does not receive the full amount of interest with regularity. But defaults are recorded and go to increase the liability, so that the borrowing of a trifling sum can, and not uncommonly does, lead in a few years to a permanent and heavy load of debt. In a number of cases a stage is reached when the money-lender takes from the worker the whole of his wages, paying him only sufficient for subsistence, and even puts the members of the worker's family to work on a similar basis.'[2]

From the point of view of the money-lender high rates of interest are sometimes defended on the ground that loans are offered on a minimum of security or on no security at all, and there is no doubt that in many cases the money-lender takes considerable risks.[3] But on the other hand, the burden of debt which is borne almost universally by the poorer

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, p. 225.

[2] ibid., pp. 225-6.

[3] 'We doubt if the majority of money-lenders amass the large profits attributed to them by popular belief. Apart from the immense amounts of interest which remain unpaid, there is a high proportion of bad debts. Although the sums collected must be enormous in the aggregate, the army of money-lenders is great and the expenses of collection are often substantial.' ibid., p. 227.

classes in India is 'aggravated out of all proportion'[1] by these high interest rates, which more than any other factor render the state of indebtedness amongst the working classes chronic, and make the grip of the money-lender almost literally, a strangle-hold.

Causes of Indebtedness

Before examining some of the remedies which have been suggested, it is necessary to consider briefly the main causes of indebtedness among the poorer classes.

In the light of what has been written above regarding high rates of interest, it is not surprising to find that amongst the railway employees, whose cases were considered in the enquiry, every single one who was indebted stated that the cause, either main or contributory—was the repayment or the accumulation of debts. Nine of the thirty-four cases mentioned marriage, in addition to accumulated debts as the cause of their indebtedness. To say that one's indebtedness is caused by debt, or the repayment of debts, seems at first sight to be either an evasive or a muddled explanation. But it is probable that the real significance of this almost universal explanation lies in the fact that the initial cause of indebtedness—possibly a marriage, a funeral, a religious ceremony or some other emergency—has been overshadowed by the way in which the capital debt has mounted up through inability to meet exorbitant interest rates.

As a result of cross-examination further light was thrown on the causes of indebtedness amongst these railway employees, and the investigators specified in their report four chief causes.[2]

1. Insufficient income.
2. The number of dependents in the family.
3. Marriage and other social and religious ceremonies. 'It has been roughly estimated that an employee, whose salary is under Rs. 50 per mensem, during a service of 30 years spends a total of 30 months' "wages" on ceremonies, social and religious (i.e. one month's wages per year).'
4. The purchase of provisions on credit. 'The majority of witnesses examined stated that they purchased rice and

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 224.
[2] ibid., p. 284.

other grains on this system, paying the shop-keeper for the previous month's supply on pay day.''[1] Often the other demands on his salary at the end of the month make it impossible for the worker to pay the store-keeper or bazaar-man all that is owed him. Only a portion is paid and thus debts accumulate. In many cases the grain seller is also in this sense a 'money-lender'.

With this summary of the conditions and causes of indebtedness amongst railway employees may be compared the following summaries of the causes of indebtedness among textile workers and printers and bookbinders in Madras city, as stated in the report on the Government enquiry.

Causes of indebtedness : Textile Workers

Income groups	Number of families whose indebtedness is mainly due to :						
	Festivals	Marriages	Funerals	Sickness	Unemployment	Insufficient income	Miscellaneous
Per month							
Below Rs. 20 ...	...	1	1	2	1	...	1
Rs. 20–30 ...	...	7	1	3	...	3	7
Rs. 30–40 ...	...	14	3	2	...	1	3
Rs. 40 and over ...	...	10	1	1	...	2	5
All groups ...	...	32	6	8	1	6	16
Per cent. of total No. indebted...	...	46·38%	8·70%	11·59%	1·45%	8·70%	23·18%

[1] *Royal Commission on Labour in India,* Evidence, vol. XI, part I, p. 284.

The corresponding figures for printing and bookbinding employees are as follows :

Causes of indebtedness :

Printing and Bookbinding Workers

Income groups	Number of families whose indebtedness is mainly due to :					
	Festivals	Marriages	Funerals	Sickness	Unemployment	Miscellaneous
Per month						
Below Rs. 20 ...	...	2	1	1	2	1
Rs. 20–30 ...	...	7	5	4	...	4
Rs. 30–40 ...	...	7	2	...	...	1
Rs. 40 and over ...	...	5	1	3	...	2
All groups ...	...	21	9	8	2	8
Per cent of total No. indebted ...	...	43·75%	18·75%	16·67%	4·16%	16 67%

The Royal Commission on Labour reported that their information went to show that the 'most important single cause of borrowing' was the expenditure on religious and social festivals 'and particularly marriages'.[1] In these tables, as in the statement regarding railway employees, marriages figure prominently as a cause of debt. But other 'religious and social festivals" do not seem to involve city families in any heavy expenditure. The city-dweller's attachment to religious tradition is frequently looser than that of the villager, and nowhere is the old German proverb, 'Stadt luft macht frei' (city air creates freedom) more true than in the realm

[1] *Report*, p. 226.

of traditional social and religious obligation. In the small village community the individual cannot escape expenditure on religious and social festivals without incurring an unpleasant notoriety, whereas in the city, where the individual is often lost in the crowd, social pressure of this kind is very much weaker and it is possible for a family to avoid such expenditure without exciting any adverse comment. The one outstanding exception to this is in the manner in which marriages are celebrated. The dowry system combined with the extravagant display which accompanies a marriage celebration have persisted in all grades of Indian society and in city and country alike. An 'elaborate' marriage ceremony is a matter of prestige, and here social pressure operates most forcefully to the undoing of many an unfortunate father of marriageable daughters. 'It is not uncommon for a worker to spend on a marriage the equivalent of a year's wages and to borrow the whole of that sum at a high rate of interest.'[1] It is not surprising in the circumstances that such a high proportion of indebtedness is attributed to marriages. Amongst the textile workers 46·38 per cent. of the indebted families and amongst the printers 43·75 per cent. gave 'marriages' as the main cause of their financial embarrassment.

Funerals and sickness are the two other most important items among the specified 'main causes' of indebtedness. A funeral, like a marriage, is frequently, among certain classes, a cause of extravagant expenditure. Here again 'custom is king' and social pressure makes a 'decent burial' a matter of prestige and so an occasion for incurring debt. Sickness involves working families in debt mainly by reducing earning capacity. Facilities for free medical treatment are available in the city, and though the poorer classes are often reluctant to avail themselves of such facilities, heavy expenditure for medical treatment is the exception rather than the rule.

Among a variety of 'miscellaneous' causes of indebtedness, one of the most common and important is the practice of purchasing provisions on credit. Reference has already been made to this factor in connection with the indebtedness of railway workers. But it applies to all classes of the poorer people in the city and is a frequent cause of permanent indebtedness. One case which came to the notice of the writer may be quoted as an example of the way in which debt is incurred by this means and also of the methods by which a certain class of money-lender exploits the illiterate poor.

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, p. 227.

An Adi-Dravida named Ponambalam who was employed as a cook in a European household on a salary of Rs. 25 per month, purchased on credit from a grain-merchant, who was also a money-lender in Madras, rice to the value of Rs. 16. Ponambalam was quite illiterate, being unable to read a word even in his own language—Tamil. The grain-merchant presented him with a document printed in English which read as follows:

No. 87 *Madras, 25-4-1932*

On demand I promise to pay ....[1] *or order the sum of Rupees 60-0-0 with interest at the rate of 24 per cent. per annum for value received in goods, payable at Madras.*

A stamp was affixed to the bottom of the note and across the stamp was written in Tamil 'Ponambalam—his mark'. The unsuspecting victim placed a large inked thumb upon the stamp[2] and having thus made himself legally responsible for sixty rupees at 24 per cent. interest, departed happily with his sixteen rupees' worth of rice in a bag. Six months later Ponambalam was employed by the writer, and on the 19th of February 1933 he appeared, apparently in great distress, and told the tale of his indebtedness. He had for three months been receiving urgent demands for the repayment of his debt plus the accrued interest. Up to that time he had paid nothing to the merchant money-lender towards either capital or interest. On the morning of the 19th of February Ponambalam received a lawyer's letter demanding the immediate payment of Rs. 72 (i.e. Rs. 60 plus interest for 6 months at 24 per cent.) and in case of default threatening legal proceedings for the recovery of the amount due. When the letter was interpreted to Ponambalam he was both bewildered and frightened, but he was quite emphatic in his assertion that he had only received rice to the value of Rs. 16. As there was no reason to doubt his honesty, it was assumed that Ponambalam's statement was correct. But as he had legally committed himself to the repayment of Rs. 60 at 24 per cent. interest, there seemed to be no possible means of extricating him from his liability for the whole amount.

[1] The name of the merchant is omitted for obvious reasons.

[2] 'The lack of forethought in mortgaging the future is illustrated by the fact that the thumb print is frequently given on a blank document or the page of a book. It is by no means uncommon for the money-lender to fill in both the capital sum and the interest rate subsequently, and, in any case, the borrower has no copy of the transaction and has usually to rely entirely on the money-lender for a periodical reckoning of the position.' (See *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 229.)

Ponambalam was given Rs. 16 and told to go to the money-lender and offer him the 16 rupees in return for the receipted promissory note and to inform him if he refused to do so, that his (Ponambalam's) employer intended to investigate the transaction and expose the money-lender's methods. Ponambalam departed and apparently told his tale with great effectiveness for in due course he returned in triumph with the promissory note, upon the back of which was a statement in Tamil to the effect that on 19-2-33, Rs. 60 had been duly received! The receipted note is now in the possession of the writer, and Ponambalam heard no more about the matter and, presumably, has changed his grain merchant.

This case has been described in considerable detail because, simple as it is, it gives some insight into the ways in which many simple and illiterate families are plunged into debt so deeply that they never succeed in extricating themselves, and it also throws light on the unscrupulous methods of the more rapacious and disreputable type of money-lender and explains the vice-like grip which he has upon so many people.

The Reduction of Indebtedness

Reference has already been made to the main points which distinguish urban from rural indebtedness. These differences, as the Royal Commission on Labour pointed out, 'render ineffective' for the urban or industrial worker, 'the means on which most stress has been laid for relieving the agriculturist, namely, the supply of co-operative credit'. Amongst industrial workers, with the exception of railway employees, co-operative credit has made little headway. The main reason for this is said to be 'the movements among the industrial population', which 'form an almost insuperable obstacle to the spread of co-operation'. The Royal Commission did not, therefore, consider the extension of co-operative credit to be a practicable means of attacking the problem of industrial indebtedness. In the case of railway workers, however, they made an exception and recommended that 'all railway administrations should make persistent efforts' to help their workers by means of co-operative credit, and gave a special commendation to the methods adopted by the Bombay, Baroda and Central Indian Railway.

In Madras city, as has already been frequently pointed out, the mobility of industrial labour is much less marked than in other industrial centres. The possibility of developing co-operative credit in the larger organized industries

is, therefore, correspondingly greater. In the large and highly organized industries such as the textile mills, the development and extension of co-operative credit would help considerably in reducing the extent of indebtedness amongst the workers and releasing them from the clutches of the professional money-lender.

The Acting Chief Inspector of Factories in Madras, in submitting evidence to the Royal Commission on Labour, emphasized the value of Co-operative Stores to the penniless migrant who arrives in an industrial town. In the absence of some reasonable credit facilities which may enable such a migrant to obtain the necessary food, pending the receipt of his first monthly wages, he is driven into the arms of the money-lender or a Chetti grocer and begins his urban life with a millstone of debt around his neck. This is but one illustration of the way in which organized facilities for co-operative credit may help to mitigate the evil of indebtedness.

It must be recognized, however, that the vast majority of the poorer classes in the city would be untouched by such a development and the only possible approach to the problem as it affects them, apart from the slow process of general enlightenment and education, is by legislative action. Even if the co-operative movement were to spread 'it would not strike at the heart of the workers' difficulties. Credit, in the sense of borrowing capacity, is not the workers' need; it would be nearer the truth to describe it as his curse.'[1] 'The fatal weakness in the present system is the comparative ease with which the worker can borrow sums which he has little prospect of being able to repay.'[2]

The Royal Commission on Labour after a careful consideration of all the factors involved concluded that the most effective approach to a solution of the problem of industrial indebtedness would be to diminish the workers' power of obtaining credit by 'making it unprofitable for the money-lender to advance to workers amounts which are beyond their power to repay'.[3]

To this end the Commission made a series of recommendations which are of very great importance. These recommendations may be briefly summarized. The Commission recommended :

(1) That the salary and wages of every workman

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 229.
[2] ibid., p. 229.
[3] ibid., p. 231.

receiving less than Rs. 300 a month be 'exempted entirely from the possibility of attachment'.

The Civil Procedure Code at present allows the money-lender to secure the attachment of the wages of 'any one who is not a labourer or a domestic servant'. This is a form of security which deliberately encourages and protects the usurious lender.

(2) That arrest and imprisonment for debt, in the case of workers in receipt of wages or salary of less than Rs. 100 per month, be abolished, 'except where the debtor has been proved to be both able and unwilling to pay'.[1]

Under the present law a male debtor is liable to be imprisoned for six months 'in execution of a decree for the payment of more than Rs. 50';[2] and for sums of less than Rs. 50, six weeks' imprisonment may be ordered. In practice debtors are seldom imprisoned; but the writer knows, from his contact with the working classes in Madras, that though seldom executed, the threat of imprisonment is often employed by the money-lender to grind from the debtor his 'pound of flesh'. The removal of this powerful weapon from the hands of the money-lender is a much-needed reform.

(3) That the attachment of workers' contributions to *bona fide* provident funds should be prevented. This protection is already granted in the case of provident funds maintained for their employees by Government and local bodies. 'There seems no reason why the same security should not be granted' to the contributions of workers to funds maintained by private employers.

(4) The Royal Commission recommended, also 'a new procedure for the liquidation of unsecured debts from workmen'. This recommendation is both elaborate and important and the description of it may best be given in the exact words of the Commission's report.[3]

We contemplate that on the presentation of an application by a workman giving a statement of his debts and creditors and assets, the court should issue a notice to the creditors and should thereafter in a summary enquiry estimate the workman's assets, his probable earnings and reasonable expenditure for the maintenance of himself and his family during the ensuing two years. The court, having assessed these, would issue a decree based on the difference between the two sums. Execution of this decree could then be obtained in the usual way, but it

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 232.
[2] ibid.
[3] ibid., p. 233.

should not be possible to keep the decree alive for more than three years in all. In order to prevent the defrauding of money-lenders by the subsequent contraction of collusive debts, we suggest that the debts should rank preferentially in order of their age, the oldest debts having priority. The application for the benefit of the Special Act embodying the procedure might be made either in response to a suit for debt or without any previous proceedings. We should like to see the duty laid on the court of applying the Special Act of its own motion in cases where it appeared to be applicable, but we recognize the difficulty of securing that such a provision will be effective; and there is no doubt that persons will be forthcoming to assist the workman in claiming his privileges. What is essential is that the procedure should be rapid and as free as possible from the intricacies and technicalities of ordinary civil court procedure.

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of this recommendation as a practical means of attacking the appalling problem of indebtedness in India. The basis of the proposal is that the court 'should regard itself as the protector of the poor against extortion and their own foolishness',[1] and should make possible the breaking of the vicious circle of indebtedness which surrounds the average worker. Special courts may be necessary as in the case of the Workmen's Compensation Act and the existence of such courts, possessing the powers proposed by the Commission, would 'place powerful weapons in the hands of all who are prepared to assist the workman' and 'lead to much greater activity in the matter of debt prevention and debt redemption on the part of trade unions, employers and individuals as well as associations working for social betterment'.[2]

The recommendations may seem to aim a devastating blow at the money-lender, and there is no doubt that those who practise usury at the expense of the poor would suffer loss by the adoption of this scheme; but it was the opinion of the Royal Commission that their proposals would 'not hurt those money-lenders, whose activities are confined to business of a useful kind'.

There are many who object to the adoption of vigorous legislative remedies to deal with the problem of indebtedness. Such objection appears to be based mainly on two grounds: (a) 'reluctance to interfere with the sanctity of contract', and (b) 'lack of faith in the efficacy of legislation'.

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 234.
[2] ibid., p. 234.

With regard to the first, it is 'a grave misuse of a good word' to talk of 'sanctity' in connection with the gross extortion which so often characterizes the normal transactions between the money-lender and the illiterate poor. The usurer takes advantage of the ignorance and distress of the worker and in most cases the contract is 'unequal and unfair from the start'. If ethical considerations are to be the determining factor in these matters, as they must be, it is surely immoral to give legal sanction to the gross exploitation of the gullibility and folly of the workers. The existing law gives such sanction and has, as a result, made possible the present deplorable conditions. If a way out is to be found a break with the old and vicious tradition, which has made anti-social usury possible on such a widespread scale, must be made. It will involve loss. But the possible 'injustice' to the usurer must be measured against the present universal enslavement of the worker with the disastrous social and economic consequences which that enslavement brings in its train.

As for the argument that legislation is not likely to be effective and that 'legislation which cannot be enforced is not merely useless but harmful',[1] the Royal Commission wrote: 'Probably there is no method which is entirely secure against evasion on the part of the lender or misuse on the part of the borrower. But we would repeat that these possibilities are not in themselves a sufficient argument against the adoption of a law that will be generally beneficial, and it is certain that until some method can be applied, the State will fail to satisfy one of the pressing needs of labour.'[2]

The Commission was of opinion that the scheme for summary liquidation proceedings, outlined by them, offered 'the greatest hope of successful working'. 'If the will to apply the remedy is present, the legal and administrative difficulties can be surmounted.'

(5) The Royal Commission further recommended that 'the besetting of an industrial establishment for the recovery of debts be made a criminal and cognisable offence'.[3] While many money-lenders deal with their victims by the threat of legal proceedings, there are some who employ 'the threat of violence rather than the processes of the law'.[4] They wait outside industrial establishments on pay day in order to

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India,* p. 230.
[2] ibid., p. 233.
[3] ibid., p. 236.
[4] ibid., p. 235.

exact their dues by intimidation. It is in order to deal with this type of money-lender, 'already generally regarded as a pest to society',[1] that this recommendation has been made.

The Commission made several other recommendations with a view to easing the burden of indebtedness. One of the most important of these relates to the prevalence in India of a monthly period of wage payment, which, in the judgement of the Commission is not in the best interests of the employees. They recommended 'the general adoption of a system of weekly payments in the belief that it will have important effects on both welfare and efficiency'. This is merely a recommendation to employers. It was further emphasized that 'in the textile industries, railway and engineering workshops and iron and steel works, *the law should require* payment of wages to process operatives at intervals not exceeding 16 days'.

The shortening of the period of wage payments should have considerable value in the easing of the embarrassments of the poor. Tradition and custom die hard, however, and the proposal will probably meet with opposition from both employers and employees. Many employers will hardly be disposed to favour a system which involves them in additional trouble and expense. The worker, on the other hand, views with grave apprehension any change which is likely to upset his accustomed relations with money-lenders, bazaar-keepers and landlords. He knows where he is under the traditional system and often stubbornly refuses to consider any suggestion which seems likely to confuse, even temporarily, his method of dealing with his creditors.

Considerable space has been devoted to this account of the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission on Labour on the problem of industrial indebtedness. The work of the Commission in this field is of great importance and the suggestions made in their report may be fairly described as the most valuable contribution which has yet been made to a solution of the formidable problems of urban indebtedness.

Little has, as yet, been done to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission. The magnitude of the problem seems to discourage practical attempts to deal with it and to encourage a kind of pernicious inertia which fears to make a beginning because the end cannot be clearly seen.

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 236.

The Royal Commission argued that its very magnitude 'enhances the importance of attacking it and increases the results to be secured by successful efforts'.[1]

If the Commission's recommendations are applied, and facile credit is largely checked it is doubtful whether India will be able to continue for long without some substitute for the Poor Law.[2] This consideration is no justification, however, for the continuance of the present pernicious system of borrowing which enslaves and demoralizes the masses of the country and by reducing their purchasing power reacts upon the total wealth and prosperity of Indian industry.

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 242.

[2] Even under present conditions there is a growing feeling that the introduction of a system of public assistance and relief cannot be long delayed.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MINIMUM OF SUBSISTENCE

In technical discussions on poverty and standards of living it is usual to draw a distinction between primary poverty, which indicates the condition of a family whose total earnings are insufficient to purchase the minimum necessities for the maintenance of physical efficiency, and secondary poverty, which describes the condition of a family which has sufficient income for the purchase of minimum needs, but, in fact, diverts a portion of that income to other purposes which, though possibly desirable may not be strictly necessary. The survey of family income and expenditure in chapter xii gives a general picture of standards of income and items of expenditure among representative groups of the poorer classes in Madras city. The chapter on indebtedness (chapter xiii) gives some indication of the extent to which expenditure exceeds income amongst these families. Indebtedness and the high interest rates which it involves amongst urban and industrial workers is one of the main causes of a state of chronic secondary poverty in the city. In this chapter, we shall for the moment ignore the complicating factor of indebtedness and make some attempt to face the problem of the minimum of subsistence in the city of Madras. The difficulty of fixing any generally acceptable standard by which a 'living wage' is to be determined is well known and widely recognized. It is impossible to eliminate a certain element of elasticity. Ideas of 'adequacy' and 'reasonableness' differ. 'The cost of living is such an unstandardized subject that a mathematically accurate determination is impossible.'[1] Commodity prices fluctuate and a figure which represents the minimum of subsistence at any given time may be rendered 'out of date' almost immediately by a movement of prices. Nevertheless, attempts which have produced far-reaching practical results, have been made in other countries to arrive at living wage estimates. Amongst the most influential have been the researches of Mr. B. Seebohm Rowntree[2] in England, the American minimum quantity budget drawn up by

[1] *Second Annual Report of the District of Columbia Minimum Wage Board* (1919), p. 18. Quoted by Richardson, *The Minimum Wage* (Allen & Unwin), 1927, p. 44n.

[2] See *Poverty : A Study of Town Life* and *The Human Needs of Labour*.

the United States Bureau of Labour Statistics[1] and various estimates which have been made in Australia, 'where attempts to apply the principles of the living wage have been the greatest.'[2]

Two main methods of determining the minimum of subsistence may be distinguished, one based on theoretical considerations, the other upon the actual standards of living in the community concerned. The theoretical method is necessarily incomplete. It is possible to estimate 'the number of calories required by adults of either sex and also by children of different ages'[3] and frame a budget for food based on theoretical necessity. It is also possible to determine approximately the cost of housing accommodation which provides the amount of air space required for healthy living by a family of given size. But for other items of expenditure theories as to minimum necessities are of little value and estimates must be based upon the habits and modes of living of the people for whom the 'theoretical' budget is to be made. This method of approach is of little practical value in determining a living wage. But it has a definite educative value in setting up standards of nutrition in the light of which the normal diet of the people may be judged and standards of housing accommodation upon which the local authority may be led to base its minimum requirements.

For the purposes of determining the minimum of subsistence the family budget enquiry method which is based on 'actual conditions' rather than 'hypothetical considerations' has generally proved to be more satisfactory and of more practical value in arriving at 'living wage' estimates.[4] When attempts are made to arrive at such estimates there is a constant tension between 'ethical' and 'realistic' considerations. In most cases the whole motive and purpose of enquiries into standards of living is the desire to improve those standards. 'If improvements are to be effected it is necessary to adopt a standard higher than that of the least fortunate members of the community.'[5] But in the determination of how much higher, the concept of welfare may overshadow the fact of economic necessity and a standard may be suggested which ignores the limitations of the total wealth of the community upon which the living wage depends.

[1] Richardson, *The Minimum Wage* (Allen & Unwin), 1927, p. 48.
[2] Richardson, pp. 52ff.
[3] Richardson, p. 42.
[4] See Richardson, *The Minimum Wage* (Allen & Unwin), 1927, pp. 43-61.
[5] Richardson, p. 44.

In this discussion of the minimum of subsistence in Madras city ideal and hypothetical considerations shall, for the moment, be left out of account. The hard facts of dire poverty among the masses in Madras are temporarily taken for granted, the limitations of the whole produced wealth of the country are recognized, and the emphasis will be placed upon what is immediately practicable rather than on what is ideally desirable.

There has been in the past a dearth of scientific enquiry on this vital question of the minimum of subsistence in India and statements upon the question are sometimes made which bear little relation to the actual standards which exist among large sections of the community. The representatives of the Madras Labour Union, for example, in their evidence submitted to the Royal Commission on Labour[1] made the following statement: 'The details supplied with regard to the cost of living lead us to the conclusion that it would be impossible for a worker to live on less than Rs. 35 a month.' We have already seen from the family budgets analysed that many families do in fact live on very much less. This is not an argument against the desirability, and indeed the necessity, for higher wages. It is a plain statement of fact, and in seeking to arrive at an estimate of the bare minimum of subsistence facts must be faced.

The Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway Company, in September 1930, compiled 'a standard budget' which aimed at 'covering the bare necessities of a working-class family whose total family income does not exceed Rs. 50'.[2]

The Rs. 50 estimate is far above the level of the masses, but this 'standard' budget is nevertheless of interest, even though it is based upon an earning capacity at present beyond the reach of the majority of the poorer classes in Madras. Its interest lies in its method rather than in the results, for the latter cannot be regarded as an important contribution to the problem of the living wage.

It was assumed that second-class rice would be used and calculated that:

(*a*) the cost of 4 measures = Re. 1.[3]

(*b*) one measure = 5 meals.

[1] *Royal Commission on Labour in India,* Evidence, vol. VII, part I, p. 173.

[2] ibid., Evidence, vol. XI, part I, p. 285.

[3] Prices are as in 1930 (September).

(*c*) one person = 60 meals per mensem.
(*d*) ∴ one person = 12 measures per mensem.
(*e*) and ∴ one person = Rs. 3 per mensem.
(*f*) two children = one person (adult).

On this basis the following results were achieved :

Size of family	Rice Ragi Jawari[1]	Dall	Other provisions	Clothing (average per month)	Rent	Fuel and Lighting	Dhobi, Barber, Sweeper	Total family budget
	RS. A.	RS. A.	RS. A.	RS. A.	RS. A.	RS. A.	RS. A.	RS. A.
2 adults	6 0	0 12	5 12	3 0	3 0	2 0	1 0	21 8
3 ,,	9 0	1 0	7 0	3 0	3 8	2 8	1 0	27 0
4 ,,	12 0	1 8	7 8	4 0	4 8	3 0	1 8	34 0
5 ,,	15 0	2 0	9 8	4 8	5 0	3 8	1 8	41 0
6 ,,	18 0	2 8	10 8	5 0	6 0	4 0	2 0	48 0

The maximum figure quoted—Rs. 48 per month—represents the budget estimate for a family of 2 adults and 8 children or 3 adults and 6 children which is a much larger family than the average. The figure given for four adults (i.e. two adults and four children) is 34 rupees per month, which is considerably higher than the income of a great many working-class families.

There is no indication of the bases upon which the estimates for various items of expenditure have been calculated and in most cases they appear to be entirely arbitrary. The only two items in the budget, which follow the rule of equal and regular increases for each additional member of the family are (1) rice, etc., and (2) fuel and lighting. In the case of rice an expenditure of Rs. 3 per head is estimated, with no reduction for increased numbers, and in the case of fuel and lighting, two rupees is the amount estimated for two adults with an addition of 8 annas for each additional adult. No similar rule seems to have been applied in the case of other items. Why, for example, in the column

[1] Rice, not ragi or jawari prices are quoted.

'Other provisions' should the increase of the family from 2 to 3 adults involve an increased expenditure of Re. 1-4, while the increase from 3 to 4 adults involves an increased expenditure of only 8 annas? Or again, in the same column, why should the increase of the family from 4 to 5 adults cause an additional outlay of Rs. 2 per month (four times the amount of increase necessary for an increase from 3 to 4), while a similar increase from 5 to 6 increases the budget by only one rupee?

The same evidence of arbitrary and irregular estimates of increases in costs to correspond to regular increases in the family is apparent in most of the columns of the budget. The compilers of the budget probably had reasons for the method by which they calculated these increases in expenditure, but in the absence of any statement on the question, the internal evidence suggests a certain amount of arbitrary guesswork rather than scientific calculation and the figures given cannot be regarded as a reliable guide to the problem of the minimum of subsistence.

The beginnings of careful scientific enquiry into the question of the living wage in Madras city may be traced to a group of young men which in 1917 met at the Kellett Institute in Madras, under the guidance of Dr. Gilbert Slater, then Professor of Indian Economics in Madras University. The aim of the group was 'to work out a standard by which to judge whether any given family income was sufficient for the physical efficiency of that family'.[1] The amount of food necessary for an adult labourer was determined by reference to the jail diet prescribed in Madras jail for an adult male prisoner doing hard labour. The cost of food per day for such a person was 2 annas 9 pies or, for a month of thirty days, Rs. 5-2-6. On that basis, it was estimated that Rs. 5 per month would be a reasonable allowance for food for a coolie engaged on manual labour.

[1] The Transactions of the Indian Economic Association (Madras Section) for the year 1920-1, Madras, p. 5. This report contains a paper read before the Association by the late Rev. D. G. M. Leith on 'The Minimum of Subsistence in the City of Madras' (November 2, 1920), in which a detailed account of these investigations is given. Upon this paper and on private papers and memoranda left by Mr. Leith at the Kellett Institute, this account is mainly based.

Further investigations as to the cost of rent, clothing and fuel were made, and the following budget representing the minimum of subsistence was suggested :[1]

	Rs.	A.	P.
For man—for food per month ...	5	0	0
For wife—for food per month—4/5 ...	4	0	0
For 2 children[2]—for food per month ...	5	0	0
Rent	1	0	0
Clothing	0	8	0
Fuel	1	0	0
Miscellaneous[3]	1	0	0
Total ...	17	8	0

It is interesting to compare this figure with the statement of Messrs. Binny & Co. regarding the average wages paid to employees in their mills. There is no figure quoted for 1917 or 1918, but the average wage paid in the Buckingham & Carnatic Mills in 1914 was Rs. 10-6, and the average paid in 1919 was Rs. 15.[4] These, be it remembered, were *average* wages and there must have been many employees in the mills who received less per month.

The results of this 1917 enquiry were published in the Madras press and they created considerable interest and evoked some criticism. Shortly afterwards the wages in the Buckingham & Carnatic Mills were increased, though it is not possible to say, 20 years later, whether or not the increase was a case of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. In the few years following 1917 there was a sharp upward thrust in prices which continued to the peak year, 1920. This rapid change in the economic position of the consumer necessitated a revision of the 1917 minimum of subsistence figures, and the late Rev. D. G. M. Leith, who was then in charge of the Kellett Institute, undertook the revision, with the assistance of a group of students.

Food.—As in the 1917 estimates, the amount of food required by a labouring man was determined by the standard

[1] The Transactions of the Indian Economic Association (Madras Section) for the year 1920-1, Madras, p. 5.
[2] This was regarded as an average family.
[3] There is a misprint in the Economic Association report. This item 'miscellaneous' is given as 1 anna instead of 1 rupee.
[4] See *Royal Commission on Labour in India,* Evidence, vol. VII, part 1, p. 147.

of jail diet for hard labour prisoners.[1] The jail diet in 1920 provided for the following quantities of food per day for a male adult prisoner doing hard labour :

	oz.		oz.
(1) Ragi ...	... 15	(6) Tamarind	... $\frac{1}{2}$
(2) Rice ...	... 5	(7) Salt ...	... $\frac{1}{4}$
(3) Dall ...	... 5	(8) Curry powder	... $\frac{1}{4}$
(4) Vegetables	... 6	(9) Onions ...	... $\frac{1}{2}$
(5) Oil ...	... $\frac{1}{2}$		

In order to give precision to the results of the enquiry regarding food, the actual commodities provided for in the jail diet were purchased in the bazaar under the same conditions as purchases are made by the labouring classes. It should be remembered that many labourers in Madras purchase their supplies on credit, and that credit prices are almost invariably higher than the cash prices at which foodstuffs were bought for this enquiry. But the aim of the enquiry was to find the minimum on which it is *possible* for a labourer and his family to live, and at this and other points, no provision whatever has been made for improvidence, extravagance or indebtedness, though these are almost universal.

The prices at which these commodities were purchased in the Triplicane Bazaar were as follows :

(1) *Ragi* : sold at $4\frac{1}{4}$ measures per rupee; but for one measure 4 annas was charged. One measure was found to equal 3 lb. and $\frac{1}{8}$ of an oz. (or $48\frac{1}{8}$ oz.) and the cost of 15 oz. was calculated at 1 anna 3 pies.

(2) *Rice* : cost $3\frac{1}{8}$ measures per rupee, or 5 annas 4 pies per measure. One measure weighed 3 lb. $5\frac{3}{4}$ oz. and the cost of 5 oz. was calculated at 6 pies.[2]

(3) *Dall* : $2\frac{3}{4}$ measures cost one rupee; but one measure costs 6 annas. A $\frac{1}{4}$ measure was purchased at $1\frac{1}{2}$ annas, and was found to weigh $12\frac{1}{4}$ oz. 5 oz. therefore cost $7\frac{1}{3}$ pies.

[1] The jail diet is open to criticism on dietetic grounds. But since its deficiencies are those which are common to South Indian diet in general, its use, as a practical and 'realistic' standard, may be justified.

[2] This is the cheapest quality rice. On enquiry it was found that few labourers purchased this cheap quality at $3\frac{1}{8}$ measures per rupee, preferring a slightly dearer quality of rice. But the cheaper quality is available and was actually purchased in the bazaar at the price quoted above for the purposes of this enquiry.

(4) *Vegetables*: are an obviously variable item and difficult to calculate, but after various enquiries it was decided that 6 pies was a fair estimate under this item for the 6 oz. allowed in the jail diet.

(5) *Oil*: one anna and 3 pies was spent in the bazaar on oil and purchased $2\frac{7}{8}$ oz. On this basis $\frac{1}{2}$ an oz. was estimated to cost approximately $2\frac{2}{3}$ pies (the exact cost is $2\frac{14}{23}$ pies).

(6) *Tamarind* was purchased at $\frac{3}{4}$ oz for 1 pie, therefore $\frac{1}{2}$ an oz. cost $\frac{2}{3}$ of a pie.

(7) *Salt*: cost $1\frac{1}{2}$ annas per measure and $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. was calculated to cost $\frac{1}{6}$ of a pie.

(8) *Curry powder*: cost. 2 pies for $\frac{1}{4}$ oz.

(9) *Onions*: cost 1 pie an oz., and $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. cost $\frac{1}{2}$ a pie.

The daily cost of food for one day for a male adult was therefore calculated as follows:

	A.	P.
(1) Ragi	1	3
(2) Rice	0	6
(3) Dall	0	$7\frac{1}{3}$
(4) Vegetables	0	6
(5) Oil	0	$2\frac{2}{3}$
(6) Tamarind	0	$0\frac{2}{3}$
(7) Salt	0	$0\frac{1}{6}$
(8) Curry powder	0	2
(9) Onions	0	$0\frac{1}{2}$
Total ...	3	$4\frac{1}{3}$

For a month of 30 days at 3 annas $4\frac{1}{3}$ pies per day the total cost of such a diet would be Rs. 6-4-10.

Rent.—This item in the budget is difficult to estimate because there is no uniformity in the available accommodation or in methods of tenancy. Some labourers live in huts, others in rooms which are sub-let in brick and tile houses. The hut is the more usual form of residence for the poorest classes, but terms of tenancy are variable. In some cases, ground rent is paid for a plot on which the tenant erects his own mud and thatch dwelling. The ground rent in such cases was estimated to average about 12 annas per month. The cost of erecting a superstructure was calculated at Rs. 30. This amount would probably be borrowed and interest would

amount to anything from 14 annas to Re. 1-8 per month on a conservative estimate.

In other cases, the entire dwelling is rented and rents vary considerably. But it was estimated that to secure a hut in Madras city by either means would cost in 1920 from Re. 1-8 to Rs. 2-4 per month. It was recognized that some labourers paid more than Rs. 2-4 and some paid less than Re. 1-8. But the estimate included in the minimum budget was Re. 1-8 per month; though Mr. Leith felt that Rs. 3 would more nearly represent the actual expenditure on rent in a majority of cases.

Clothing: A man requires a loin cloth and a head cloth for use by day and as a covering for the body by night. It was estimated that a labourer required two pairs of cloths (a pair = a long cloth and a head cloth) per year. In 1920 a single cloth cost Re. 1-2, and a year's clothing, therefore, cost Rs. 4-8 for a man.

His wife also requires two cloths per year. A 'sari' is usually 7½ yards long. A plain white cotton 'sari' could be bought in 1920 for Rs. 3-12. But in practice such white cloths are seldom worn in Madras except by widows. A cheap coloured 'sari' cost, in 1920, Rs. 5-2, and two a year meant an annual expenditure of Rs. 10-4 on the woman's clothes.

It was assumed that there were two children in the average family and they were provided for in the budget on the basis of one cloth each per year, at 10 annas per cloth, making a total for children's clothing of Re. 1-4 per year.

The cost of clothing for the entire family for one year was thus estimated as :—

	Rs.	A.	P.
Man	4	8	0
Woman	10	4	0
Children	1	4	0
Total ...	16	0	0

The cost per month was, therefore, Re. 1-5-4.[1]

[1] There was a miscalculation in the figures as printed in the *Report of the Indian Economic Association* (Madras Section), 1920-1, p. 8. Rs. 16 per year was said to amount to a monthly expenditure of Re. 1-4-0—an obvious error, which appears in the final budget estimates as well as in the separate paragraph on clothing.

Fuel.—In 1920 one 'gundu' of firewood cost 8 annas. To boil one measure of rice $\frac{1}{6}$ of a 'gundu' is the minimum required. It was felt that the cost of fuel could not be estimated at less than 9 pies per day or Re. 1-6-6 per month.

Miscellaneous.—In this budget no explicit provision was made for light, for travelling, for sickness, for visits to the barber, or for the fact that there are more months of thirty-one days than of thirty in the year. Such necessary items were supposed to be covered by the very modest provision of 12 annas per month for 'miscellaneous' expenditure.

The 'barest minimum' required to maintain a family of four in Madras city in 1920 was thus estimated to be as follows:

	Rupees per month		
For food for man	6	4	10
For food for wife ($\frac{4}{5}$)	5	0	8
For food for 2 children	6	4	10
Rent	1	8	0
Clothing	1	5	4
Fuel	1	6	6
Miscellaneous	0	12	0
Total[1] ...	22	10	2

Size of the Average Family

The size of the average family is obviously a question of the very greatest importance in relation to an attempt such as this to estimate with precision the minimum of subsistence.

In his address to the Madras branch of the Indian Economic Association on the question, Mr. Leith expressed the opinion that the estimate of two children per family was an underestimate, but he had no figures with which to justify this opinion.

The following tables throw some light on the question. They are taken from the evidence submitted by the Madras Government and the Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway Company to the Royal Commission on Labour in 1930.[2]

[1] The miscalculation under the item of clothing meant that the total printed in the Economic Association's Report was Rs. 22-8-10.

[2] *Royal Commission on Labour in India,* Evidence, vol. XI, part I, pp. 13, 17 and 286-99.

1. The families of 79 textile workers were constituted as follows :

Income groups	No. of families	Average No. of adults	Average No. of children (under 15)	Average Total family
Below Rs. 20 p.m.	6	2·50	1·83	4·33
Rs. 20–30 ,,	26	2·81	1·96	477
Rs. 30–40 ,,	24	3·67	2·33	6·00
Rs. 40 and over ,,	23	4·70	2·52	7·22

2. The families of 50 printing and bookbinding employees were constituted as follows :

Income groups	No. of families	Average No. of adults	Average No. of children (under 15)	Average Total family
Below Rs. 20 p.m.	7	2·85	1·29	4·14
Rs. 20–30 ,,	20	3·10	1·60	4·70
Rs. 30–40 ,,	10	3·30	2·00	5·30
Rs. 40 and over ,,	13	3·70	1·69	5·39

3. The families of 40 railway employees were constituted thus :

Income groups	No. of families	Average No. of adults	Average No. of children (under 15)	Average Total family
Under Rs. 20 p.m.	10	2·4	3·3	5·7
Rs. 20–30 ,,	10	2·6	2·8	5·4
Rs. 30–40 ,,	10	3·5	3·5	7·0
Rs. 40–50 ,,	10	4·1	2·1	6·2

The most interesting feature of these family statistics is the fact that in every group and at all levels of income (from under 20 rupees to over 40) the average family contains more

than two adults, and that in almost every case the average number of adults is greater than the average number of children. Thus, while the average family seems to contain more than four persons, it also seems to contain more than two adult members. The number of earning members or potential earning members is in most cases greater than the number of children or non-earning members.

In the light of the facts revealed by these figures it is difficult to regard the family of two adults and two children which was made the basis of the minimum family budget as an underestimate. These figures, in fact, suggest that the average family is stronger in potential earning power than the two-adult family of the minimum budget, while in five out of twelve groups, the number of children or non-earners averaged less than two; and in every one of the remaining groups the excess of children (over the two provided for in the minimum budget) is compensated by a corresponding excess of adults. It would seem therefore that the family of four (two adults and two children) is, on the whole, an adequate basis for a standard minimum budget.

Earnings of the Wife

This estimate of Rs. 22-10-2 as the 'barest minimum' required to maintain a family in Madras in 1920 was known to be higher than the current wages of many labourers. It was recognized that the wife of the labourer is frequently an earning member of the family and without the wife's earnings many families could not subsist.[1] The earnings of women vary greatly, and it is very difficult to arrive at an average estimate. Much depends on the type of work on which a woman secures employment and on the number of hours per day which she is able to devote to it. She may do casual coolie labour. She may make and sell 'oppams' (rice cakes). She may be a grass cutter, a water carrier, a scavenger or sweeper or a tiffin carrier. As a casual coolie or a grass cutter she might do a full day's work, taking her children with her and leaving them to play about while she worked. As a scavenger or tiffin carrier her employment would be limited to certain hours of the day and her earnings correspondingly limited. Any estimate of the wife's earnings

[1] The extent to which families in Madras depend upon the earnings of women and children is a damning indictment of the existing conditions and of the system which produces these conditions.

can, therefore, only be a guess. In 1917 the Kellett Institute Enquiry estimated the wife's earnings at Rs. 4 per month. In 1920 Mr. Leith said : 'I doubt if we should be justified in estimating it (the wife's income) at higher than Rs. 4-8.'[1] On this basis the Madras labouring man needed to earn at least Rs. 18-2-2 per month in addition to his wife's earnings to provide the barest necessities for his family. There were probably many who did not earn so much.

Conditions in 1920 and later

It is to be remembered that in 1920, when this estimate was made, conditions of living, from the point of view of those on low fixed incomes, were at their very worst. Prices had reached unprecedented heights and had risen so rapidly since 1917 that wages had lagged considerably. In 1919 and 1920 there were probably large numbers of the poorest families living under what were virtually famine conditions. It is not without significance that the death rates during these years were abnormally high in the city.

The total death rates per 1,000 in Madras city from 1916 to 1921 were as follows :[2]

1916	34·5
1917	38·4
1918	60·3
1919	52·4
1920	41·3
1921	38·5

The 'influenza' epidemic of 1918-19 was mainly responsible for the appalling death-rate figures recorded in those years. But there can be little doubt that the havoc wrought by this exceptional visitation was greatly increased and accelerated by the under-nourished condition of masses of the poorer people in Madras city which made them easy victims of disease and death.

In 1921 prices dropped steeply and the downward tendency continued, though more slowly, until 1929 when again there was a sharp and sudden drop which continued till 1931 and sent prices down to below the immediate pre-war level. The

[1] *Report of the Indian Economic Association* (Madras Section), 1920-1, p. 9.

[2] *Report of the City High Mortality Committee*, Madras, 1927, part I, p. 30.

marked fall in the cost of living over this decade undoubtedly eased the situation enormously for the poorest classes in the city. But at the same time it brought flocking into Madras (see chapter iv) crowds of people from the rural areas of the presidency, many of whom found difficulty in securing the bare means of subsistence for their families.

In 1931 there was thus a situation which differed considerably from that which existed in the city in 1921. It was decided to revise the estimate of the minimum of subsistence formulated by the late D. G. M. Leith in 1920, in the light of the changed economic conditions in the city, and the writer, together with a group of social workers at the Kellett Institute, undertook the task. The standards and quantities of food, clothing, fuel, etc. adopted in the 1920 enquiry were followed exactly, and the family of four (two adults and two children) was again taken to represent the average. In every detail the investigation followed the lines laid down by Leith, and it is unnecessary, therefore, to give a detailed account of the revision.

It was found that the price of food grains (rice and ragi) had dropped by approximately 50 per cent. since 1920, that the downward movement in the prices of clothing and fuel was slight in comparison, and that rent (still a variable item) had, on the whole, increased considerably.

The result of the revision showed that a standard of living for a family of four, which in 1920 cost Rs. 22-10-2 per month, in 1931 cost only Rs. 15-11-6 per month.[1] In other words, the cost of living, at the level of bare subsistence, had fallen during the period by over 30 per cent. Though this undoubtedly meant a substantial mitigation of the sufferings and semi-starvation of the poorest classes, it must be emphasized that the standards represented by this 'minimum subsistence' budget, though based on a 'realistic' approach to the facts, are so low that they ought not to be tolerated in a civilized community. This budget makes no provision for anything save bare animal necessities. There is no provision for comfort of any kind, no opportunity for a holiday, nothing to

[1] The 1931 budget was made up as follows:

	Rs.	A.	P.
Food for man, wife and 2 children	10	2	6
Rent	2	8	0
Clothing	1	2	0
Fuel	1	3	0
Miscellaneous	0	12	0
Total ...	15	11	6

spend on the education of children, no safeguard against sickness or old age, and nothing provided for births, marriages and deaths. Expenses for such inevitable needs or emergencies can be met, under this budget, only by one means—the reduction in the consumption of food; and the quantities of food were calculated with a nicety which left no room for waste or bad cooking, and even at their best represented the barest minimum necessities.

A MINIMUM WAGE

The 'most direct method of raising the standard of living'[1] is to raise the earnings of the workers. When the question of increasing wages is raised in India an objection which 'has even found its way into official reports'[2] is at once encountered. It is argued that the low-paid worker is content with the standard of life to which he is accustomed and that 'when he has earned enough to maintain that standard, he ceases to make any further effort.'[3] This is 'apparently believed by not a few employers'[4] and many such employers can cite instances to substantiate their theory. If this 'conception of the fixed standard' be true, then it provides an unanswerable argument against increasing wages; for an increase in wages would 'diminish production without benefiting the worker financially.'[5] There can be little doubt that of *some* people it *is* true—not only in India, but in other parts of the world, that there is a pathetic content with low standards of life and an absence of desire for improvement. 'The "lack of needs" among the less virile, deplored in every part of the world, is accompanied in India by a peculiar difficulty in making articulate the sense of needs that are felt.'[6] And it is this inability to give expression to his sense of need, a sense which is often only a 'vague feeling of dissatisfaction',[7] which leads many people in India to assume that all, or almost all, Indian labourers are content with their low standards of living. This is, in fact, very far from the truth, for the Indian worker though often inarticulate is in many cases conscious of a desire for betterment. If it were true it would be 'impossible to raise the workers' standard of

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, p. 209.
[2] ibid., p. 209.
[3] ibid., p. 209.
[4] ibid., p. 209.
[5] ibid., p. 209.
[6] J. H. Kelman, *Labour in India* (Allen & Unwin), 1923, p. 199.
[7] ibid., p. 199.

living except by coercion'.[1] But there is 'no doubt that it has in fact risen appreciably in recent years',[2] and the doctrine of the fixed standard is 'not true of the great bulk of Indian industrial labour, for it is contradicted by the facts'.[3] It was shown in chapter xi, on the evidence of Messrs. Binny & Co., that the level of real wages in their mills has risen very considerably during recent years, and there is 'ample evidence'[4] to show that this increase in real wages has been fairly general. If, in fact, standards of living have risen in recent years the 'idea of any general fixed standard is fallacious'.[5]

What is both true and largely responsible for this mistaken judgment is that a sudden accretion of income is seldom wisely spent; the worker cannot raise his standard of living overnight. Further, as the standard of comfort is improved, there is an intelligible and reasonable tendency to secure some increase in leisure at the expense of part of the possible increase in income. We can appreciate the preference of the worker for some remission of toil.[6]

The conclusion of the Royal Commission on Labour, on this question, was that 'employers need not be deterred from raising wages by any fear that they will be injuring the workers thereby'.[7]

The problem of achieving reasonable minimum standards of living is closely allied to the possibility of instituting minimum wages. In other countries what is in effect a minimum wage has been established over large areas of industry and trade by the process of collective bargaining. But such a 'minimum wage' is dependent upon the organized strength of the Trade Union Movement and is ultimately subject to the consent of the employers to the terms of the proposed bargain, and the 'agreed minimum wage' applies only in those firms which are voluntary parties to the agreement.

In India the Trade Union Movement is, as yet, relatively weak. 'The All-India Trade Union Congress had affiliated to it in December 1929, 51 unions claiming 190,436 members; but this included one large union whose figures were questionable. Membership is everywhere loosely defined, and

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, p. 209.
[2] ibid. [3] ibid. [4] ibid.
[5] ibid. [6] ibid.
[7] ibid., p. 210.

many unions retain on their books members who have long ceased to pay their subscriptions.'[1]

There is little prospect of such a rapid and effective development of the Trade Union Movement as would make the instrument of collective bargaining an immediate means of raising the standards of living among India's industrial masses. The most formidable obstacle to such an advance in the Trade Union Movement lies in the lack of an educated proletariat,[2] and the process of education must necessarily be slow.

But Trade Unionism, even if it were developed and effective, would almost inevitably be limited to the more highly organized branches of industry and trade and would thus leave untouched the smaller, unregulated industries, which in respect of wages, conditions of employment and standards of living amongst their employees present much more urgent problems. The highly organized industries do not necessarily lower the standards of living of those whom they absorb.[3] In many cases they raise them and it is not, therefore, with employees in highly organized industry that the problem of primary poverty is most acute. It is not possible to look to the Trade Union Movement or any system of collective bargaining for the alleviation of the problem of poverty at those points where alleviation is most needed.

The alternative to collective bargaining is some form of State intervention whereby a legal minimum wage is instituted and made applicable either universally, or over the whole or a particular part of a selected trade or trades.

The machinery and method of minimum wage legislation and administration in other countries has varied considerably.[4]

1. *Ad hoc* bodies may be appointed to deal with separate industries as in the English Trade Board System and the system of Wages Boards in certain Australian States. By this method different minima may be fixed for different industries, and normally attention is concentrated on those industries and trades where wages are lowest and unorganized or badly organized workers are in need of protection.

2. Instead of *ad hoc* bodies or Trade Boards appointed to deal with each industry alone, a central authority may be appointed to fix the minima for various industries and the

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, p. 321.
[2] See *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, pp. 321-2.
[3] ibid., p. 212.
[4] See E. M. Burns, *Wages and the State;* Richardson, *The Minimum Wage* (Allen & Unwin), 1927.

minimum rates may be varied according to the state of industry and the cost of living in different areas. This system operates in certain parts of Canada and Australia.

3. A third method of minimum wage legislation is the institution of a universal statutory minimum applicable to all forms of employment. An actual figure may be laid down by Act of Parliament to apply over the whole country and failure to pay this legal rate becomes a criminal offence punishable in law. The most outstanding example of this type of legislation is the Minimum Wage Act of New South Wales (1908) by which the employment of any person at less than four shillings a day was prohibited in that State.

In the administration of any form of minimum wage legislation very serious practical difficulties arise. The most prominent of these are the problem of the definition of a 'living wage' and the relation of the minimum wage to the 'capacity of industry to pay'.

The Whitley Commission on its visit to India 'received a considerable volume of evidence . . . on the practicability of instituting statutory minimum wages', but 'the majority of witnesses in favour of the principle appeared to desire the arbitrary fixing of wages for industrial workers at a level sufficient to provide what appeared to them a reasonable standard of living, apparently without regard to the comparative prosperity of industry or the ultimate effect on the economic structure of India as a whole'.[1]

In recent years the subject of minimum wage legislation in India has been raised in connection with the Draft Convention on the subject adopted by the International Labour Conference in 1928 and the question of India's ratification or non-ratification of the Convention. The I.L.O. Minimum Wage Convention deals with 'trades or parts of trades (and in particular of home-working trades) in which no arrangements exist for the effective regulation of wages by collective agreement or otherwise and wages are exceptionally low'.[2] The Government of India took the view that ratification could not be considered until 'a thorough enquiry'[3] into the possibility of establishing wage boards in India had been held. The Legislative Assembly and the Council of State both agreed that the Convention should not be ratified 'pending the report of the Indian Labour Commission'.[4]

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India,* 1931, p. 211.
[2] ibid., p. 212.
[3] ibid., p. 212.
[4] ibid., p. 212.

The Royal Commission was thus forced to give specially careful consideration to the problem and they approached it (in their own words) 'from the point of view of the needs of India rather than of the applicability of international conventions'.[1]

The Chairman of the Commission, the late Rt. Hon. J. H. Whitley, P.C., M.P., possessed an intimate knowledge of the Trade Board system in England and it is not surprising that the recommendations of the Royal Commission follow, with a somewhat cautious conservatism, the English tradition in minimum wage legislation and method.

The English Trade Board legislation[2] was aimed specifically towards 'sweated' industries. Its purpose was not so much to raise the general level of wages all round as to raise the supply price of labour in cases where it was abnormally low and to adjust wage rates in such 'sweated' trades relatively to what was customarily paid for the same type of work elsewhere. Accordingly the Act of 1908 mentioned four specific trades (tailoring, paper-box making, machine-made lace and chain making) in which there was a strong presumption that conditions of employment and wages demanded detailed investigation and legal control.

The Indian Royal Commission on Labour recommended that the question of statutory minimum wages should be examined first in relation to selected industries in which it is believed that conditions 'warrant detailed investigation',[3] and they specified a group of unregulated industries which in their judgment might be 'examined in the first instance with a view to the need and possibility of instituting minimum wage-fixing machinery'.[4] The industries named in the Commission's report were: mica cutting and splitting, wool cleaning, shellac manufacture, *bidi* making, carpet weaving, and tanning.[5] Of these industries, *bidi* making and tanning are established in Madras. The former is extensively organized throughout the city; the latter is largely confined to the outskirts of the city, Chromepet—a leather-making village with tanning factories being outside the city boundaries.

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, p. 212.
[2] Trade Board Acts of 1908 and 1918.
[3] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 213.
[4] ibid., p. 214.
[5] ibid., p. 94.

The Royal Commission's recommendations on the question of minimum wages are summarized as follows :[1]

> Before the minimum wage-fixing machinery can be set up:
>
> (*a*) the industries in which there is a strong presumption that the conditions warrant detailed investigation should be selected;
>
> (*b*) a survey of conditions in each such industry should be undertaken as the basis on which it should be decided whether the fixing of a minimum wage is desirable and practicable;
>
> (*c*) the trade should be demarcated and the composition and number of the Wage Boards should be decided; and
>
> (*d*) as much as possible of the information likely to be needed by the Wage Boards, if appointed, should be collected.
>
> When a decision has been reached as to whether the conditions in any case justify the setting up of machinery, particular attention must be given to the cost of enforcement and the policy of gradualness should not be lost sight of.
>
> The industries referred to in chapter vii (i.e. mica cutting and splitting, wool cleaning, shellac manufacture, *bidi* making, carpet weaving and tanning) should be examined in the first instance with a view to the need and possibility of instituting minimum wage-fixing machinery.
>
> If the results of investigations show the need for minimum wage-fixing machinery in industries of this kind the necessary legislation for setting up such machinery should be undertaken.

As yet little has been done to implement these recommendations.

So far as Madras city is concerned, there is little doubt as to the necessity for some form of wage regulation. The evidence available on standards of living makes that necessity clear. The problem is immense and very complex. But a beginning must be made at some point and there is abundant scope for improvement, which would affect the lives of many families, even within the limits of a single unregulated industry such as *bidi* manufacture. If the recommendations of the Royal Commission were followed and machinery for the regulation of wages within a single industry established, a favourable reaction upon other wage levels would almost certainly result.

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 212-14. Also Appendix I, pp. 507-8.

Appendix to Chapter XIV

Notes on the Bidi Industry

The *bidi* industry in Madras employs thousands of workers under the most unfavourable conditions.[1] In respect of child labour in the industry the Whitley Commission remarked: 'This recalls some of the worst features of child apprenticeship in England at the time of the agitation prior to the passing of the First Factory Act.'[2]

The writer has frequently visited many of the main centres of *bidi* manufacture in Madras city and the following notes give some indication of the nature and urgency of the problems presented by this industry.[3]

The *bidi* is an indigenous cigarette, made by hand, and sold in large quantities all over India at extremely cheap rates.

In Madras city the work of manufacture is carried on mainly (*a*) in 'large-scale' factories employing anything up to 200 people, (*b*) in single rooms or in ordinary bazaar bunks, and (*c*) by women in their own homes (usually by Mahommedan women who observe the rules of *purdah*).

The so-called 'large-scale' factories are usually ordinary dwelling houses into which the workers are crowded, and conditions of ventilation and sanitation are frequently entirely inadequate. As the plant required for *bidi* manufacture is extremely simple, it is possible to establish a factory almost anywhere. A flat basket containing a little pile of chopped tobacco, a bundle of leaves shaped for rolling the *bidis*, a roll of inferior cotton, a knife and a pair of deft fingers constitute the equipment of the *bidi* maker. He squats, cross-legged, on the floor with his basket beside him, and rolls the tobacco into the leaves, tying each separate *bidi* with cotton and tucking in the ends of the roll to prevent the tobacco from falling out, and performing the whole series of actions with quite amazing skill and dexterity. The completed *bidis* are in turn tied in bundles of 50, labelled, and distributed to the bazaars for sale.

In itself, *bidi* making is a clean and pleasant occupation, but it is ordinarily carried on in Madras under conditions which give cause for grave concern. The workers are crowded into small and ill-ventilated rooms in conditions of intolerable congestion. Seldom are adequate latrines provided. Hours of work are unregulated. Wages are low (though on this point it is difficult to secure reliable information),[4] and child labour is extensively

[1] See *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, pp. 96-7.

[2] *Report*, p. 96.

[3] Some of the material in these notes is reproduced from an article by the writer published in *The National Christian Council Review* (India), May 1935.

[4] See *Royal Commission on Labour in India*, Evidence, vol. VII, part II. Evidence of Mr. V. T. Arasu.

employed. The smaller factories are almost invariably under the control of large *bidi* merchants, who supply raw materials (tobacco, leaves, etc.) to the small factory-owner and pay fixed rates per 1,000 for finished *bidis*. The small factory is left to secure labour at the most advantageous rates.

In a great many cases when juvenile labour is employed, the parents of the children are heavily in debt to the employer and the possibility of unjust and even cruel treatment is greatly increased, as the employer has almost complete control over both parent and child. In a few cases, which have come to the notice of the writer, parents have been known to sell the labour of their children for a definite period, the result being akin to the crudest forms of slavery.

Workers as young as five years of age may be found in some of these places working without adequate meal intervals or weekly rest days, and often for 10 or 12 hours daily, for sums as low as two annas in the case of those of tenderest years.[1]

Here are conditions which demand an immediate enquiry. *Bidi* manufacture, though singled out for detailed description, presents conditions which are not much worse than those which obtain in other unregulated industries. The facts disclosed in this appendix are typical; and it is in these industries that the problem of minimum wages and undesirable employment in Madras city may be most appropriately attacked.

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 96.

PART V

SOCIETY

CHAPTER XV

THE FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN SOCIETY

DR. EDWYN BEVAN provided Indian political jargon with a new metaphor when he described the bureaucracy as the 'steel frame' of the Indian administration.[1] The same metaphor has been applied with considerable appropriateness to the caste system. Caste is 'the steel frame of Indian society'. Viewed simply as an achievement of social organization, the caste system must be regarded as one of the most notable and impressive phenomena in the whole history of social evolution. The massive and enduring strength of the Hindu social structure has withstood, down through the centuries, all the fissile and disruptive influences of armed invasion, military conflict and political upheaval. 'I believe caste division to be the *chef d'oeuvre*, the happiest effort of Hindu Legislation', wrote the Abbé Dubois.[2] 'I am persuaded that it is simply and solely due to the distribution of the people into castes that India did not lapse into a state of barbarism, and that she preserved and perfected the arts and sciences of civilization while most other nations of the earth remained in a state of barbarism.' This striking cohesion and stability has depended entirely upon the rigid co-ordination of social and economic life and the inflexible codes of conduct prescribed and enforced by the Hindu family and caste organization.

MEANING OF CASTE

The word 'caste' we owe to those 'Portuguese adventurers who followed Vasco da Gama to India'.[3] The Portuguese word 'casta' appears to have been derived from the Latin 'castus' and 'implies purity of breed'.[4] The difficulty of describing and defining with adequacy the system which this

[1] Edwyn Bevan, *Thoughts on Indian Discontents* (Allen & Unwin), 1929, p. 7.

[2] *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*—translated by H. K. Beauchamp (Oxford), 1928, p. 28.

[3] *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (The Indian Empire), 1907, vol. I, p. 311.

[4] ibid. Ketkar, *History of Caste* (Luzac), 1909. vol. I, pp. 12-13. Risley, *The People of India* (Thacker, Spink & Co.), 1915. For early allusions to 'caste', see *Hobson-Jobson* (Yule and Burnell), 1903 edition, Murray, London, pp. 170-1.

word represents is clearly evident in all the literature on the subject and obvious to anyone who has lived in India and sought to gain an understanding of the complex and often hopelessly tangled web of social life in that country. The *Imperial Gazetteer of India* defines a caste as 'a collection of families or groups of families, bearing a common name which usually denotes or is associated with a specific occupation; claiming common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine; professing to follow the same calling; and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community.'[1] 'A caste', it is added, 'is almost invariably endogamous'.[2] Other definitions varying in their emphasis are found throughout the literature on the subject,[3] but no definition can be regarded as satisfactory in the sense of covering all the facts. 'It appears to us' writes Dr. Ghurye in his recent book on the subject, 'that any attempt at definition is bound to fail because of the complexity of the phenomenon'.[4]

Origin of Caste

Similarly, with regard to the origin of many of the modern manifestations of this complex system, despite an abundance of industrious research, it has not been possible to achieve more than some 'more or less plausible conjectures derived from the analogy of observed facts.'[5] It is not within the scope of this chapter to enter in detail into this somewhat speculative field of enquiry. But some understanding of the manner in which the caste system took shape in early Indian history is possible, and is necessary to the intelligent interpretation of the modern situation.

Varna, meaning colour, is one of two Sanscrit words used to describe caste distinctions, and it is generally believed that the colour consciousness of the early Aryans led to the creation of a sharp colour bar between the relatively tall, fair-skinned invaders of India and the various aboriginal tribes which came under their authority. J. N. Farquhar

[1] *The Indian Empire*, 1907, vol. I, p. 311. The account of caste in the *Imperial Gazetteer* is reproduced from Risley's chapter on 'Caste, Tribe and Race' in the Report on the Census of India for 1901.

[2] ibid., p. 311.

[3] See E. A. Gait, *Hastings' Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (Article on 'Caste'), 1910 edition, vol. III, p. 234; Ketkar's *History of Caste in India* (Luzac); 1909, vol. I, p. 15; Emile Senart, *Les Castes dans l'Inde* (Librairie Orientaliste Paul Guethner—Paris), 1927, p. 238; Gualtherus H. Mees, *Dharma and Society* (N. V. Service, Denhaag), 1935, p. 71.

[4] G. S. Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India* (Kegan Paul), 1932, p. 1.

[5] *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1907, vol. I, p. 348.

held that the *Avesta* and the *Rigveda* suggest that while the ancestors of the Persians and the Indo-Aryans were 'still a single people', they were 'like so many other ancient races', divided roughly into three classes, nobles, priests and common people.[1]

When with the progressive conquest of northern India, successive groups of aboriginal inhabitants came under the authority of the invaders, a new distinction on the basis of colour was added to the existing class or functional division of Aryan society. It was from these roots that the caste system grew. 'The various factors that characterize caste society were the result in the first instance of the attempts on the part of the upholders of the Brahmanic civilization to exclude the aborigines and the Sudras from religious and social communion with themselves.'[2] But these early attempts at race protection and the class divisions within Aryan society were not 'caste' in the sense in which the word was later used. The development so far described would have produced little more than the endogamous religious groups common to the social life of a number of ancient peoples, whereas the Hindu caste system in its developed form presented a 'perfectly unique form of social organization'.[3]

The failure to make a clear distinction between the old Aryan social order indicated in the ancient scriptures, and the later development of that system into a rigid caste structure has led to some confusion of thought and Dr. Mees[4] attributes much of the confusion to the 'first translators of Sanscrit texts' who translated *varna* as 'caste'.[5] Mees holds that the word 'caste' should be applied only to 'the ultimate development of *Jati*'—'the historical and actual social conditions in India',[6] while the ideal class-system as pictured by the ancient sages, 'which formed the basis of *Jati*',[7] should be described by the word *varnas*. There is much justification for this emphasis on a clear distinction between the early Aryan class division and the later Hindu social system.[8]

[1] J. N. Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism* (Oxford University Press), 1920, p. 157.

[2] G. S. Guhrye, *Caste and Race in India* (Kegan Paul), 1932, pp. 143-4.

[3] J. N. Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism*, p. 159.

[4] Gualtherus H. Mees, *Dharma and Society*, 1935, p. 50.

[5] ibid.

[6] ibid.

[7] ibid.

[8] It is doubtful, however, whether Mees' exclusive use of the word 'varna' (colour) to describe the Aryan social order is justified, for the genesis of that order (nobles, priests and common people) belongs to a period prior to the Indian Conquest when the colour question had not arisen in an acute form.

The priestly (or Brahman) ascendency and the introduction of the colour-bar which marked the early period of the Indian invasion do not necessarily render the early Aryan system different in kind from the social stratification familiar in other countries and civilizations.

It was from this Aryan 'class-society' that the caste system evolved. Emile Senart believed caste to be 'inexplicable' without this traditional foundation. But he also held the later system to be 'unintelligible' apart from 'the racial admixtures which have crossed in it' and without 'the circumstances which have shaped it'.[1] The ultimate absorption of indigenous aboriginal groups and their complete assimilation into a more or less unified system resulted in a bewildering assortment, within that system, of tribal, functional, sectarian and other groups, which were all subordinated to the hierarchy of the priestly and ruling (or Ayran) classes. These groups not infrequently sub-divided, and the tendency towards internal fissure in an already confusingly segmented society has produced a situation in modern India in which it is estimated that Hinduism is split horizontally into 'about three thousand hereditary groups each internally bound together by rules of ceremonial purity, and externally separated by the same rules from all other groups'.[2]

In this complex and variegated social pattern which is the caste system of India, the *Imperial Gazetteer* (or more accurately, Sir Herbert Risley) distinguished seven different types of caste :[3]

(1) Tribal castes—formed by the conversion of a tribe into a caste.

(2) Functional castes—'Community of function is ordinarily regarded as the chief factor in the evolution of caste'.[4] Caste sub-division was frequently made on the basis of changes of occupation.

(3) Sectarian castes—religious sects which developed into distinct caste units : e.g. Lingayats.[5]

(4) Castes formed by crossing—the result of tribal inter-marriage.

[1] Emile Senart, *Les Castes dans L'Inde* (Librairie Orientaliste Paul Guethner, Paris), 1927, p. 238.

[2] V. A. Smith, *Oxford History of India*, p. 34.

[3] *Imperial Gazetteer* (The Indian Empire), vol. I, pp. 313-22.

[4] ibid., p. 314.

[5] ibid., pp. 314-16. See also O'Malley, *India's Social Heritage*, p. 9.

(5) National castes—'certain groups, usually regarded as castes at the present day, which cherish traditions of bygone sovereignty'.[1]

(6) Castes formed by migration.[2]

(7) Castes formed by changes of custom—'the formation of new castes as a consequence of neglect of established usage, or the adoption of new ceremonial practices or secular occupations, has been a familiar incident of the caste system from the earliest times'.[3]

This classification, whether or not it can be regarded as complete, at least serves to illustrate the varied range of social formations and groups embraced by the caste system. The system

> splits up society into a multitude of little communities, for every caste, and almost every local unit of a caste, has its own peculiar customs and internal regulations. The differences are so many that at a cursory glance the caste system appears to be a mass of inconsistencies, which would almost seem to argue a want of system; but such a view is merely a case of being unable to see the wood for the trees. There are unifying principles underlying the differences of detail. The caste system has a synthesis of its own, and follows a general plan which is recognizable in all parts of the country.[4]

The Key to Caste Unity

What is it that has given to this amazing federation the unity and strength which have been its most striking characteristics down through the centuries?

A complete answer to this question is not to be found by an examination of the machinery of the system. The tendency of a great deal of the research which has been directed to an analysis of 'caste' has been to focus attention upon the objective manifestations of the system. This 'objectivism' has had useful results in unearthing and interpreting a mass of interesting facts; but as a means of discovering the unifying power of caste it has grave limitations. Those who have followed the objective method have tended to emphasize a single sociological factor as the key to the problem, with the result that the literature on the subject is littered with

[1] *Imperial Gazetteer* (Indian Empire), p. 318.
[2] ibid., pp. 319ff.
[3] ibid., p. 321.
[4] O'Malley, *India's Social Heritage* (Oxford University Press), 1934, p. 13. The chapter on 'Caste' in this book gives an accurate and illuminating account of the system as it exists in modern India.

competing theories—all of them different, most of them important, but none of them complete. Sir Herbert Risley's concentration on ethnological considerations led him to regard the idea of kinship as 'certainly the oldest and perhaps the most enduring factor in the caste system'.[1] Nesfield on the other hand, was 'the most dogmatic upholder of the occupational doctrine of caste'.[2] For him 'function and function only' provided the 'foundation upon which the whole caste system of India was built'.[3] Sir Edward Gait combined Risley and Nesfield and laid emphasis upon the twin bonds of kinship and function.[4] Senart regarded the family system as the basis of caste,[5] but qualified his views by 'reminding his readers that no statement that can be made on the subject can be considered as absolutely true'. Dr. S. V. Ketkar propounded the theory that the 'chief principle on which the entire system depends is that of purity and pollution. The Brahmana is at the top of society because he is more pure and sacred than other castes, while Mahar and Paraiyan are at the bottom because they are impure. Thus purity is the pivot on which the entire system turns. Rank, social position, economic condition have no direct effect on the gradation from the standpoint of caste. They are simply aids to establish the status. Caste in India is strong and rigid because the ideas of the people regarding purity and pollution are rigid.'[6]

There can be no doubt as to the importance of the part played in the shaping of the caste system by each of the factors emphasized by the various writers quoted. But none of these theories provides an adequate explanation of the astonishing fact that a vast population organized on the basis of extreme social segmentation has been successful in maintaining the unity and cohesion of a closely-knit society. It might be argued that kinship, function, family and ceremonial purity have been predominantly divisive rather than unifying influences, and that it is in spite of rather than because of these factors that the caste system has remained

[1] *Imperial Gazetteer* (Indian Empire), 1907, vol. I, p. 337.
[2] G. H. Mees, *Dharma and Society*, p. 65 note.
[3] 'Brief View of the Caste System of the N.-W. Provinces and Oudh' quoted in *Imperial Gazetteer*, vol. I, p. 338.
[4] E. A. Gait, *Hastings' Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (Article on 'Caste'), 1910 edition, vol. III, p. 234.
[5] *Les Castes dans l'Inde.* 'To assume with Senart, that the family system was the basis of caste is difficult in face of the late appearance of word for family and of stress on family.' A. A. Macdonell and A. B. Keith, *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*, 1912, I, 28 et seq.
[6] Ketkar, *History of Caste in India* (Luzac), 1909, vol. I, pp. 121-2.

intact through the centuries. Caste presents the paradox of a system which unites and divides at the same time.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF CASTE

The key to the paradox lies not in the external organization of the system but in the religious and philosophical ideas which lie behind the complex social stratification of caste. 'In order to understand the spirit of the ages which upheld caste and *varna*, one must take pains to understand the philosophy which justified this system', writes Dr. Ketkar.[1] Caste rests upon the assumption or belief that mankind is not a unity and is, in fact 'the antithesis of the principle that all men are equal'.[2] The human race consists of 'a large number of species each of distinct origin and each man is born into that species or sub-species for which his *karma* [action] fits him'.[3] 'The caste system sought its justification in the theories of *karma* and transmigration of souls',[4] and there can be little doubt that 'apart from the religious character of caste the Indo-Aryans could never have gathered the races of India into a great religious empire, nor could the people have held together through all the storms and changes of three thousand years'.[5] Here then, is the answer to the question—wherein lay the unity and strength of the caste system?

The general acceptance of the doctrine of the divine origin of caste and the complementary theory of *karma* at once divided and unified Hindu society. It justified the segmental divisions, the civil and religious disabilities and the privileges of the different sections; while at the same time it made the control of the hierarchy easy and provided moral and religious sanctions for the domination of the Brahmans.

The doctrine of the special divine creation of the different social groups appears early in Hindu literature. In the *Rigveda* the three old Aryan classes—priests (Brahmans), nobles (Rajanyas or Kshatriyas) and people (Vaisyas)—together with the conquered aborigines (Sudras)—are described as having each a separate origin in God. There is a

[1] Ketkar, *History of Caste in India* (Luzac), 1909, vol. I, p. 111.
[2] O'Malley, *India's Social Heritage* (Oxford University Press), 1934, p. 7.
[3] Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism* (Oxford University Press), 1920, p. 164.
[4] Ketkar, *History of Caste in India*, vol. I, p. 123.
[5] Farquhar, op. cit., p. 191.

passage describing Purusha as 'the great sacrifice', which proceeds:

> The Brahman was his mouth; the Rajanya was made from his arms; the being called Vaisya, he was his thighs; the Sudra sprang from his feet. (*Rigveda*, X, xc, 12.)

It is, however, in the Laws of Manu that this doctrine is found in its most developed form, and to those laws orthodox Hindu thought appeals in proof of the divine origin of the caste system. The Laws of Manu are in fact regarded as the highest authority on Hindu social practice. O'Malley dates this document 'between the second century B.C. and the second century A.D.'.[1] In the Laws of Manu we read:

'But for the sake of the prosperity of the worlds, he [God] caused the Brahmana, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya and the Sudra to proceed from his mouth, his arms, his thighs and his feet.'[2] And later,

'But in order to protect this universe He, the most resplendent one, assigned separate (duties and) occupations to those who sprang from his mouth, arms, thighs and feet.'[3]

These passages are the basis of the well-known grouping:

(1) Brahmans—priests.
(2) Kshatriyas—warriors and rulers.
(3) Vaisyas—business men and farmers.
(4) Sudras—servants.
(5) Panchamas—outcastes, untouchables, etc.

The first three represent the 'twice-born' castes, who alone wear the sacred thread and are supposed to be of pure Aryan blood. The Sudras represent former aborigines who were admitted to the Hindu community; and the fifth class were supposed to be 'unclean aborigines and progeny of mixed marriages'.[4]

The modern caste system bears little resemblance to the schematic theory of orthodoxy. It is, in fact, almost impossible to fit all the modern facts into the scheme. But 'starting from this basis, the standard Indian tradition proceeds to trace the evolution of the caste system from a series of complicated crosses, first between members of the four groups and then between descendants of these initial unions'.[5]

[1] O'Malley, *India's Social Heritage* (Oxford University Press), 1934, p. 11.
[2] Buhler's translation (Clarendon Press), 1886, ch. I, 36.
[3] ibid., ch. I, 87.
[4] Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism*, p. 163.
[5] *Imperial Gazetteer* (The Indian Empire), vol. I, p. 332.

Sir Herbert Risley dismisses, somewhat brusquely, 'the pious fictions of Manu '[1] as bearing no relation to realities, but it is obvious that quite apart from the truth or error of this pious speculation, the doctrine of the divine origin of caste has played a most important part in strengthening the hold of the system upon the people. When to this doctrine was added the reasoned philosophy of *Karma* and transmigration the justification of caste as a social theory was complete. This brilliant speculative solution of the problem of human suffering and class inequality not merely justified caste but made the system 'a moral necessity, thus distinguishing it from 'every similar system that has existed in the world'.[2] According to the doctrine of *karma* a man's caste is determined by his past life, and his social position is an indication of the state of his soul.[3] Transmigration and *karma* are closely bound together. The theory of transmigration is 'that souls are emanations of the divine spirit, sparks from the central fire, drops from the ocean of divinity; that each soul is incarnated in a body times without number; that the same soul may be in one life a god, in another a man, in a third an animal, or even a plant, and that the series of births and deaths goes on in a never-ending cycle, the soul finding no rest nor relief from suffering, unless it finds some means of release from the necessity of rebirth and returns to the divine source whence it came'.[4] The literal meaning of the word *karma* is action, and the doctrine of *karma* implies that

> a man's body, character, capacities and temperament, his birth, wealth, and station, and the whole of his experience in life whether of happiness or of sorrow, together form the just recompense for his deeds, good and bad, done in earlier existences. Every act necessarily works itself out in retribution in another birth. The expiation works itself out not only in the man's passive experience (*bhoktṛitvam*) but in his actions also (*kartṛitvam*). Then these new actions form new *karma*, which must necessarily be expiated in another existence; so that, as fast as the clock of retribution runs down, it winds itself up again, as Deussen remarks.[5]

The idea of transmigration has been found in countries other than India but there is reason to believe that 'the

[1] *Imperial Gazetteer* (The Indian Empire), vol. I, p. 336.
[2] J. N. Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism,* p. 140.
[3] ibid., p. 140.
[4] ibid., p. 137.
[5] ibid., p. 137. (See also Ketkar, *History of Caste*, vol. I, pp. 113-14.)

Hindu doctrine of *karma* is unique '.[1] *Karma* and transmigration have had a quite incalculable influence upon Hindu thought and practice. Their rise 'proved the occasion, at least, if not the cause of that splendid excitement of the Indian mind which created Hindu philosophy '.[2] In the realm of social organization they sharpened and hardened the lines of caste division and gave the system its final rigidity and strength. Without these doctrines to provide a moral and religious justification for caste this form of society could never have captured the conscience of the whole country or maintained its power over the lives of so many millions throughout an unbroken period of many centuries.[3]

So long as these ideas continued to colour the thought of the Indian people caste was secure—the hierarchy, with the Brahmans at the top remained intact, the sharp social divisions and carefully regulated gradations of rank retained their rigidity. There have been many and frequent external changes. The old occupational alignment of the caste system has in many places been broken up almost completely, and there have in recent years been many changes in social practice especially with regard to food. But so long as these changes have not disturbed the essentially theocratic basis of caste, so long as the theological ideas underlying the system have continued to hold sway in Hindu minds, 'it is as if some superficial cracks had appeared in the stucco front of a building, while the brickwork behind it remained solid '.[4]

If this argument be accepted then the corollary is inescapable that the decay of the underlying philosophy of caste must inevitably mark the first beginnings of a genuine disintegration of the system.

[1] J. N. Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism*, p. 135. (See also Sir Berriedale Keith's paper in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1909, p. 569.)

[2] ibid., p. 221.

[3] It is generally reckoned that by the close of the sixth century B.C. caste had arisen in all its essentials.

[4] O'Malley, *India's Social Heritage*, p. 189.

CHAPTER XVI

CASTE AND CITY LIFE

It is in the cities of India that the caste system has been exposed to the full blast of the modern forces which are tending towards its disintegration, and it is important that some attempt should be made to describe the impact of urban life upon the ancient social tradition of India. The situation is confused to the point of chaos and the old orthodoxies survive cheek by jowl with the new modernisms. Nevertheless it is possible to isolate from out the mass of bewildering evidence which urban India presents a few outstanding factors, which, by cutting sharply across the old stable traditions of caste, have been primarily responsible for the present confusion.

A New Social Integration

The most obvious and direct challenge to the caste system is inherent in the competitive and cosmopolitan nature of modern city life. The Indian social system has been described as 'essentially anti-urban'.[1] It is an economy primarily designed to meet the needs of a self-sufficing rural community. The Indian village as it formerly existed, and still exists in many parts of the country, provides the setting in which caste may be seen at its best and at its worst—in which its success as a means of securing the co-operative distribution of labour, and its ruthlessness as a means of perpetuating social oppression are most clearly demonstrated. The self-contained village had 'its little oligarchy of hereditary headmen, its accountant with the staff necessary to carry on the light duties entailed by the connection of the village with the administration of the revenue system, but place was also assigned for the body of artisans required to supply the immediate wants of the cultivators'.[2] At its best, this rigid social structure represented the ideal of a community life based on co-operation rather than competition and the antithesis of individualist commercialism and the ideals of liberal democracy. The Census Report for 1881 draws attention to 'a curious instance' of the anti-commercial spirit of the

[1] *Census of India*, 1881, vol. I, p. 274. [2] ibid., pp. 274-5.

Indian village community, 'in the absence of a defined place in the social scale for the dealer in goods not actually produced in the village itself '.[1] The local weaver 'who gains his pittance from the fitful custom that falls to his lot as occasion demands '[2] has a recognized position in the community, while the trader or shop-keeper, who traffics in articles not made by himself, 'has to rest content with the equivocal position which money will bring even in the village '.[3] This, at least, was the position fifty years ago; and though recent years have seen many changes in Indian social practices, in the life of India's villages caste has for the most part maintained its strength. How long it will continue to wield unquestioned dominance has, however, become a matter for speculation. The traditional seclusion and self-sufficiency of the villages has been invaded at many points (see chapter i) and the growth of rapid transport and especially the use of the ubiquitous motor bus, by increasing contact between town and village, has weakened perceptibly the insularity of the rural communities. 'Every improvement in the means of communication, whether in actual transport or in such spheres as wireless or the cinema strengthens the influence of the town over its surrounding area.'[4] The cinema is finding its way even to remote villages, and plans are at present afoot for such an extension of broadcasting as will bring many rural areas more directly under the influence of the cities than ever they have been before. And it is quite certain that the links between city and village will grow progressively stronger.

There is no need to develop at length the obvious contrast between the background of village life (which has here been briefly described), in which caste found its most natural expression, and the setting of social life in the city where the dominant keynotes are competition and freedom. 'The caste constitution of society', writes Risley, 'if justified in the circumstances of its origin and in many of its results, imposes a rigid bar to free competition and to the development of civilization '.[5] And again, 'the whole tone of religious thought, with its philosophy of fatalism, is against the individualistic self-assertion necessary to success in the struggle for existence; it is opposed to co-operation for civic

[1] *Census of India,* 1881, vol. I, pp. 274-5.
[2] ibid.
[3] ibid.
[4] David Glass, *The Town* (Bodley Head), 1935, p. 4.
[5] *Imperial Gazetter of India* (Indian Empire), 1907, vol. I, p. 502.

ideals; and it promotes indifference to life '.[1] In other words, caste, in the circumstances of city life, is a glaring anachronism.

We are not, at the moment, concerned with the merits or demerits of competitive individualism, or the ethics of the self-assertion characteristic of an acquisitive society. Rightly or wrongly, modern Indian urbanism has grown under the stimulus of these forces. Commerce is the principal *raison d'être* of Madras city. The early concentration around Fort St. George was attracted mainly by the prospect of trade with the company. The subsequent growth of the town continued to be governed largely by commercial development. Contributory factors may be found in the political influences which made Madras an important centre of government, in the development of the British legal administration with the consequent establishment of the higher courts in the city, and in the increasing educational importance of this growing urban centre. All these influences—commercial, political, legal and educational—combined to produce a new urban *bourgeoisie* which had no recognized place in the old functional alignment of caste.

The members of this new urban middle class—consisting of business men, Government servants, lawyers, doctors, teachers, etc.—were drawn from many different castes, and the force of commercial or professional necessity, together with the unifying influence of a common background and common interests, tended to create a new form of social integration, which, over large areas of daily life, challenged and flouted the rigid separatism of the old order. In the world of business or in the pursuit of normal professional duties, the maintenance of caste was not only an inconvenience, but at many points an impossibility and was, in that sphere, quietly but definitely abandoned. This abandonment of the external trappings of caste was, however, in most cases only partial. The home is the last stronghold of caste, and many who in the outside world walked apparently unfettered by obsolete tradition, observed in the domestic sphere a meticulous regard for caste rules—their women-folk would in most cases see to that. Thus there has grown up a dual standard, whereby many live somewhat uneasily in two different and contradictory worlds. But even the conservative world of domestic life has been progressively invaded by new and anti-caste practices, as for example in the matter

[1] *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (Indian Empire), 1907, vol. I, p. 501.

of servants. It was not, in the past, customary to keep servants for domestic purposes. But today the practice is almost universal in middle-class city homes. The upper classes found their own labour in one direction so valuable that it was soon recognized that it was unprofitable to continue to perform for themselves those household services which caste-tradition decreed should be so performed. Where caste conflicted with economic advantage, caste was liable to lose the battle.

It was amongst the middle classes and in the manner thus briefly indicated that city life made its first and most obvious assault upon caste practices. The conditions of life in an urban society have produced a steadily growing tendency to adapt or abandon the old rigid rules of behaviour. Standards of orthodoxy have been progressively modified amongst the educated classes in every department of social life with one notable exception.

The exception is in respect of marriage. Though there have been occasional isolated instances[1] of inter-caste marriage it is still true that the matrimonial rules of caste continue to be observed with the greatest care. Inter-caste marriage is recognized by law. The Special Marriage Act of 1872 made possible a valid marriage between persons belonging to different castes 'provided the parties registered the contract, declaring *inter alia* that they did not belong to any caste or religion'.[2] This Act was amended in 1923 and the clause relating to the renunciation of religion rescinded. But an inter-caste marriage still 'involves for a man loss of membership of a joint family and loss of the right of adoption'.[3] Though these legal facilities for the breach of caste rules relating to marriage exist their use is quite exceptional.

In matters of occupation, food, social intercourse and travel, freedom from caste restrictions has been won in the city. There are, to be sure, many who are as scrupulous in their observance as the conditions of city life will permit them to be. There are still more who maintain a double standard of conduct in relation to caste matters. But the man who

[1] In 1933 a son of Mr. Gandhi who 'belongs to a trading caste', married the daughter of a Brahmin (Mr. C. Rajagopalachariar, the present Prime Minister of Madras). This marriage provoked a storm of protest from orthodox circles and 'a purification ceremony had to be performed so as to bestow upon the bridegroom a quasi-Brahmanhood'. (See O'Malley, *India's Social Heritage*, p. 15 footnote.)

[2] Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India*, pp. 152-3.

[3] O'Malley, *India's Social Heritage*, p. 186 footnote.

claims and exercises complete freedom of action is no longer regarded either as a hero or a heinous sinner. He is, in fact, taken very much for granted, and though he may cause concern to his orthodox relatives and possibly meet with censure and opposition from them, he is not likely to cause concern or receive rebuke from anyone else. At the beginning of this century there was to be found in most cities a very earnest and somewhat self-conscious social reform movement, which was pre-occupied mainly with the fight for freedom from obsolete caste restrictions. J. N. Farquhar in *Modern Religious Movements in India*[1] gives an account of the activities of some of these organizations, which enables the present generation to realize how hardly caste freedom has been won and how recent has been the victory. Farquhar describes as 'the boldest action taken by social reformers in recent years' an inter-caste dinner organized in Bombay in 1912, which evoked a storm of controversy. This organized flaunting of the laws of caste was a feature of city life in India some twenty-five or thirty years ago, and the writer has been told by some of the veteran reformers in Madras of the bitter conflict and controversy evoked by actions which today pass unnoticed. It is a measure of the change which has taken place in these matters that these stories of 'bold action' and stormy conflict now seem so remote, and that the old type of self-conscious caste reform has ceased to exist —or perhaps, more accurately, has been diverted into other channels.

If it has been amongst the middle classes that the urban revolt against caste has been most vocal and self-conscious, it must not be assumed that other classes of the community have been untouched by the unsettling influences and necessities of city life. The author of the Report on the Census of the Town of Madras in 1871 was impressed by the elasticity with which caste practices were adapted to the conditions of a crowded urban existence amongst the poorer people in the city. 'The laws of caste', he wrote, 'are evidently very elastic, and bend to the needs of poverty and public convenience, else we should never hear of so marked a violation of the law that the dwelling together of different castes must entail shame and loss upon all that are above the lowest caste represented in the house'.[2] And again on the question of caste and occupation, it was almost as true in 1871 as

[1] The Macmillan Company (New York), 1924. (First published, 1915). pp. 419-20.
[2] *Census of the Town of Madras*, 1871, p. 11.

it is today that in the city 'the caste of an individual is no guide whatever to his daily calling . . . nearly all have diverged widely from their original caste occupation, but some more than others '.[1]

In the maelstrom of city life the maintenance of the 'cults and distinctions which are the essence of day to day Hindu living' was as impossible for the labouring Sudra as for the cultured Brahmin, and the working classes in the city, 'just as much as the western-educated man, have in their own way been drawn into the orbit of western civilization',[2] and learned to sit lightly to the old social distinctions and 'all the paraphernalia of religion'.

The Growth of Political Democracy

Another factor of almost incalculable influence in the weakening of the power of caste is to be found in the rapid growth in recent years of the political movement. This cannot be regarded as specifically urban; but it is in the cities that the new political ideals have found most ready acceptance and democratic institutions have been most successfully established. Consequently it has been from amongst the educated urban *bourgeoisie* that the political leadership of the country has been almost exclusively drawn. Much has been written about the impact of western education upon Indian thought and life and the theme has a certain hackneyed familiarity. The political developments of the last half-century have been perhaps the most outstanding result of that impact; and it is through the spread of the democratic ideal and the growth of democratic institutions that the most devastating assault upon the old social tradition has been made.

The fever of national aspiration and struggle has been the dominant fact of Indian history during the last twenty-five years, overshadowing in public interest all other issues. It has coloured almost every public utterance. It has influenced almost every public action. It has often embittered personal relations. Beginning as an urban *bourgeois* movement it has percolated outwards from the intelligentsia to the masses and has bound a formerly disunited country into a conscious unity. This statement is not mere rhetoric, and remains true despite many fissiparous tendencies within the country and indeed within the movement itself.

[1] *Census of the Town of Madras*, 1871, p. 83.
[2] W. Paton, *Christianity in the Eastern Conflicts* (S.C.M.), 1937, p. 81.

At the beginning of this century the introduction of democratic institutions in India was a question of academic rather than practical interest. Sir Herbert Risley wrote about it with a detachment characteristic of his period and was inclined to dismiss democracy as an undesirable if not an impracticable ideal for India:

'In considering how such a democracy would work in India', he wrote, 'it must not be forgotten that caste would provide the party in power, the party that had spoils to divide, with what Americans call a "machine" surpassing in efficiency the wildest dream of the most efficient wire-puller. It already possesses a ready-made system of standing caucuses each under the control of a "boss" or a committee of "bosses". Once organized for political purposes, it could whip up voters *en masse* and could secure the adoption of any conceivable ticket. Men would be compelled to vote solid by penalties compared with which the Papal interdict that drove an Emperor barefoot to Canossa was a clumsy and ineffectual instrument. In a society where everyone is peculiarly dependent on his neighbours, the recalcitrant voter would speedily find himself cut off not merely from the amenities, but also from the barest necessities of life.'[1]

This rather grim warning as to the dangers of democracy in India has happily been falsified by events. While there may be isolated instances in which something akin to what Risley predicted has taken place and caste organization has led to the abuse of democratic rights, it is broadly true to say that caste has not conquered, but has *been conquered*, by democracy. Communalism is, to be sure, a major problem and the forces of reaction have exploited it to the full and will doubtless continue to do so. But it must not be forgotten that communalism and caste are not synonymous, and in some of its manifestations the so-called 'Communal' movement represents a direct challenge to the caste system. The growth of the Justice or non-Brahmin party in Madras was essentially a challenge to the political domination of the Brahmin; and the securing to the outcastes or 'exterior castes' of political representation is similarly a recognition of the social and political rights so long denied to these communities by the caste system. Both the upholders and the opponents of the system of communal representation take their stand on the principle of equal rights, though they differ fundamentally on the question as to how such rights may best be secured.

[1] *The People of India* (Thacker, Spink & Co.), 1915 edition, pp. 285-6.

Of far deeper significance than any constitutional juggling or political manoeuvring is the broad fact that there is a virtually universal recognition of the democratic principle and an appeal to it from all sides as a kind of final arbiter in political matters. The question that concerns us now is not whether this is right or wrong, wise or unwise. The relevant fact is that, rightly or wrongly, democracy has become naturalized in urban India to an extent deemed impossible thirty years ago—and the end is not yet. And in a country bound for centuries by the strong chains of autocracy and caste, the growth of democratic feeling cuts sharply across the foundations upon which the old social structure formerly rested with what appeared to be impregnable security. As yet the implications of this fact are but dimly realized and it is only in the city that the process of disintegration has advanced to the point of complete collapse. But events move in modern India with kaleidoscopic swiftness, and the past few years have witnessed changes of the most far-reaching significance, the repercussions of which are spreading outwards in ever-widening circles.

The Persistence of Caste

To suggest that caste has disappeared or even to suggest that its influence is negligible would be to create an entirely false impression. A system which for a couple of millennia has held virtually unchallenged sway over the thought and life of a community does not lie down and die with convenient promptitude merely because it is confronted with the mushroom growth of capitalist democracy. Such a long tradition leaves an almost indelible mark, and the spirit of caste is woven into the very fibre of Indian thought; and though many of the external trappings of the system may be shed when they become inconvenient, the subconscious influence of caste is still powerful even amongst those who deem themselves 'emancipated'. The ban on intermarriage, for example, is still observed almost as widely and carefully in the city as in the most remote rural area. Not only is the retention of caste prejudice and practice in the city influenced by the powerful traditions of the past. It is not infrequently strengthened by the concrete problems of the present. Reference has been made to the growing influence of the city over the village as a result of increased mobility and contact. But this influence works also in the opposite direction, though admittedly less powerfully and noticeably. It is,

however, an undoubted fact that many city-dwellers are restrained from the renunciation of caste duties and obligations primarily because of their contact with more genuinely orthodox relatives in the country. 'The force of custom and sentiment is so great that it has led the people to create a dual standard of life rather than break with their village folk.'[1]

The strength of the caste tradition even in the city is illustrated in the recent tendency for caste groups to form special organizations or associations for the purpose of uniting all the members of a caste speaking the same language. This strange recrudescence of caste-solidarity is in many cases inspired by political or worldly motives and often has little connection with the things for which caste originally stood. The functions of these organizations are usually to further the general interests and social status of the caste, to collect funds for the education of deserving students belonging to the community, to help the unfortunate and the poor and occasionally to seek to regulate certain caste customs.[2] As Dr. Ghurye points out, the formation of these caste groupings has had the result of making caste 'the centre of an individual's altruistic impulse and philanthropic activities'.[3] Also, 'the community-aspect of caste has thus been made more comprehensive, extensive and permanent, more and more of an individual's interests are being catered for by caste, and inevitably "greater caste consciousness" is developed'.[4]

Another interesting manifestation of the persistence of the caste spirit in the city is to be found in the odd fact that the co-operative movement has in some cases 'afforded another opportunity for caste-solidarity to manifest itself'.[5] 'Co-operative housing, more than any other aspect of co-operative undertaking, has appealed to the caste spirit, though credit societies of individual castes, like that of the Reddis, are not altogether unknown. In fact it would be true to remark that those co-operative housing societies have succeeded most which have restricted their membership to their caste fellows.'[6] Caste has invaded even the modern sphere of the Joint Stock Company and cases are not unknown where the holding of shares in an undertaking is limited to members of one caste.[7]

[1] G. S. Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India* (Kegan Paul), 1932, pp. 173-4.
[2] ibid., pp. 177-8.
[3] ibid., p. 181.
[4] ibid., p. 179.
[5] See Ghurye, p. 177.
[6] ibid.
[7] ibid.

It would be possible to continue almost indefinitely citing instances of the way in which the caste tradition continues to operate in the new setting of city life. Sufficient has been written, however, to indicate that the spirit of caste still retains a powerful grip upon the Indian mind and has sufficient inherited vitality to find new forms of expression even in a social climate which tends to suffocate it.

Caste has, however, in the stress of city life, undergone a process of continuous adaptation, which has tended to become increasingly radical and has resulted in a state of elaborate confusion.

CHAPTER XVII

FAITH AND SOCIETY

MR. CHRISTOPHER DAWSON, in his book *Progress and Religion*, concludes a brilliant analysis of the relations between religion and culture with this statement:

> We are only just beginning to understand how intimately and profoundly the vitality of a society is bound up with its religion. It is the religious impulse which supplies the cohesive power which unifies a society and a culture. The great civilizations of the world do not produce the great religions as a kind of cultural by-product; in a very real sense the great religions are the foundations upon which the great civilizations rest. A society which has lost its religion becomes, sooner or later, a society which has lost its culture.

India provides a classical example of a culture and a society based explicitly on a religious faith. We have seen that the distinctive social tradition of this country gained its widespread acceptance and maintained its extraordinary cohesion because it was the social expression of the doctrines of *karma* and transmigration. We have also seen that this ancient structure of caste, which has for centuries maintained an almost incredible stability has, under modern conditions, been forced into a process of confused and widespread adaptation. Are these changes merely superficial cracks in the facade of the structure? Or are they evidence of an unmistakable disintegration?

THE IMPACT OF THE WEST

There have been instances in India's past history of forces which in different periods have attempted to deflect the course of Hindu social development. Two such attempts are specially notable and important, because each operated differently. Buddhism, 'one of the most superb plants that have sprung from the soil of Hinduism', operated internally. Islam was for centuries the paramount political power and operated externally. But the absorbent and recuperative power of Hinduism proved invincible and in both cases the Hindu view of life finally prevailed.

The effective interpenetration of Indian thought by the West did not begin until the early years of the nineteenth

century. The outstanding fact which distinguishes this modern assault upon Indian social traditions is that beneath the impact of the West the economic foundations of Indian society have been radically disturbed, and for this reason the changes of the last hundred years have proved to be more fundamental than any which preceded them.

There are in modern India to be found in simultaneous ferment many complex movements—economic, political, intellectual—which elsewhere have made their way by slow and gradual stages and 'small increments of growth'. A process of social evolution which in Western Europe was spread over centuries has, in India, been compressed into decades. Furthermore, the process of transition and ferment is taking place in the 'crucible' of an ancient civilization which has roots closely intertwined with religious faith and philosophic speculation. The attempt to employ the 'hackneyed reference to the Middle Ages' in an effort to describe the contemporary situation in the Orient has been sternly discouraged by Professor Tawney in his valuable book on China.[1] It is

> sadly overworked and leaves a great deal unsaid. It is misleading, indeed, both in principle and detail. On the one hand, it implies a comparison of stages of development, as though the Chinese version of civilization instead of differing in kind from the European, were merely less mature. On the other hand, it ignores the sharp contrasts between them, not only, the most important point—in spirit and quality, but in circumstance and environment. The most obvious of the economic characteristics of mediaeval Europe—to mention no other—was that its population was small, its uncultivated area available for colonization large.

What is here written of China is equally true of India and is a warning against facile and misleading analogy with European developments.

In attempting to disentangle the complex web of forces which are steadily undermining the ancient system of caste there is a danger of over-simplification. But it is possible to detach a few of the influences which operate powerfully towards disintegration. Here we may traverse briefly some of the ground covered in the last chapter.

(1) *The growth of commercialism and industrialism* has forced its way into a society based on an essentially co-operative order of village life and thrust men as they have never before

[1] *Land and Labour in China* (Allen & Unwin), 1932, p. 18.

been thrust, not only into physical contact but into modes of life and thought entirely alien to the old exclusively graded order. Under the impact of economic forces an entirely new type of social integration is rapidly developing.

(2) *The growth of democratic idealism* has brought into being a vigorous political movement which is cutting sharply across the old autocratic basis of caste and the social stratification implicit in the old order.

(3) *The revolt of the exterior castes* is one of the most dramatic developments of recent years and represents a direct assault on caste tradition.

(4) *The growing influence of dialectical materialism* is a recent development in political thought. It is as yet entirely academic, but its influence is considerable. The idea of the class war is obviously alien to the whole conception of caste and destructive of the old form of caste alignment.

(5) *Finally, and in some respects more pervasive and potent than any other influence, the message of Christianity* has operated in two different directions. In the redemption of the outcaste the Christian Church has led the way. By the diffusion of the teaching of Christ the thought of the whole country has been influenced by the conception of the supreme value and sacredness of personality.

All these forces and many others have been operating simultaneously on the ancient structure of Hindu thought and society. How has Hinduism reacted? It is difficult to answer that question briefly without being betrayed into misleading generalization. Hinduism is an amorphous mass of cults, doctrines and practices that quite defies definition, and it is impossible to speak broadly of Hinduism as such with anything like precision. But it is possible with some measure of accuracy to indicate some of the trends of Hindu thought.

Movements within Hinduism

It is broadly true to say that Hinduism's most striking reaction to Western influence—secular and religious—has been the growth within the Hindu system of an immense crop of reform movements.

The earliest of these movements were distinctly radical in character and were sometimes based on a somewhat uncritical admiration of the West. They sought with great earnestness to achieve social and religious reconstruction and reform. Hinduism is in practice a polytheism. The new movements were aggressively theistic and strongly coloured by Christian doctrine. They aimed explicitly at the

abolition of caste, which they regarded as inconsistent with true religion.

It is significant, however, that these early reform movements were followed by another group of organizations with a somewhat different emphasis. These latter groups represented the spirit of revolt against the West. They were critical and defensive, and claimed that Hinduism was as good as, or better than Christianity. At the same time, they combined with a theological defence of the old faith, a programme of social reform which aimed at the elimination of the grosser evils of the Hindu social system.

The temper underlying this Hindu revival was in many respects healthy and desirable, though much of its apologetic was naïve in the extreme and full of historical inaccuracies. The religious reaction found an ally in the rising nationalism of the country and the spirit of *Swādharma*, as expressed in the 'Vedic fundamentalism' of the Arya Samaj and the Neo-Vedantism of Swāmi Vivekananda, became the religious counterpart of *Swādeshi* and the dominating element in the religious attitude of many Hindus.

In contemporary Hinduism the strongest and most pervasive of all religious attitudes is that of syncretism. The typical syncretist 'has learned from Christian, and perhaps from other sources, things that are true and that are not acknowledged in Hinduism and he is determined to show that true Hinduism includes these things, contrary though they may be to its fundamental principles. The syncretism thus involved is none the less real in that it is not acknowledged.'[1]

The syncretistic attitude is native to the Hindu mind. The tradition of Hinduism has been to absorb and retain within its framework the most varied, divergent and often contradictory cults, doctrines and practices, and its absorbent capacity is unlimited. This inherited tendency is strongly reinforced by the modern spirit of nationalism which excites the emotion of loyalty to all that is of Indian heritage and stimulates the desire to claim for Hinduism much that is alien to it. This appropriation of material from other sources is sometimes justified by the astonishing theory that 'the various dogmatic formulations are no more than paraphrases of one and the same principle'.[2] On this strange assumption Professor Coomaraswamy defines the aim of religious contro-

[1] W. Paton, *The Student World*, vol. XXVII, No. 4, p. 311.
[2] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Coontemporary Indian Philosophy*, p. 122.

versy as not to 'convert' the opponent, 'but to persuade him that his religion is essentially the same as our own'.[1] This attitude is sometimes described as 'catholicity', and the 'catholicism of *Vedānta*' is extolled as embracing 'all sciences, philosophies and religions of the world by accepting their ultimate conclusions and classifying them according to their order of merit'.[2] It is claimed that the universality of *Vedānta* is 'unique and unparalleled'.[3] The attempt to be utterly comprehensive ends in a form of intellectual anarchy which recognizes no ultimate standards of truth.

It is of importance to note that the Neo-Hindu Movement has abandoned almost completely the attempt to maintain the doctrinal basis of caste. In the reconstruction of Hindu thought *karma* and transmigration have been subtly reinterpreted as having no direct relation to the social order and caste is asserted to be a social and *not* a religious institution. This theory of caste as a purely social institution is one of the most striking indications that the old theological basis of the system is regarded as untenable even by the stoutest defenders of the Hindu faith. But in its anxiety to be absolved of the responsibility for the development of caste in its present form Hinduism is being forced into the position that faith and society have no necessary connection with one another.

That does not, of course, mean that the problems of society are ignored or neglected. The Neo-Hindu Movement has stimulated a great deal of interest in and service for the well-being of the community. The ideal of service has gained an increasing hold upon the educated youth of the country and a great wealth of constructive and valuable work has been and is being done throughout the country. The bulk of this work is directed towards the amelioration of the lot of the exterior castes. There are also many who seek the reform of the caste system on a wider scale.

THE REFORM OF CASTE

There are three main schools of thought which may be distinguished in the contemporary attitude to caste.

(1) There are those who believe in the possibility of a reconstruction of the system on the basis of four original *varnas*—a reversion to the imagined state of Aryan Society.

[1] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, p. 121.
[2] Swāmi Abhedānanda, ibid., p. 57.
[3] ibid., p. 57.

Mahatma Gandhi is one of the most outstanding advocates of this view.[1] A philosophical exposition of the theory is to be found in an essay by Bhāgavan Das entitled *Atma-Vidya or Science of the Self*.[2] This modern interpretation of caste is based upon the assumption that there are 'four natural psycho-physical types or classes of human beings, viz.: the man of knowledge, the man of desire, the man of action, the man of unskilled or little-skilled labour and of undifferentiated, unspecialized, comparatively uneducable child-like mind, who has no initiative of his own and can do mostly only what he is told by others of the other three types'.[3]

This is interesting as a theoretic rationalization of modern conditions in terms of the old order, but it has little practical value. 'Mahatma Gandhi has not given us a complete programme by means of which he proposes to reinstate the four old orders.'[4] It is to be noted that in Bhāgavan Das' schematic outline the untouchables find no place and Gandhi's emphasis on the 'criterion of birth and heredity' leaves doubt as to where the untouchables are to be provided for.[5] Quite apart, however, from that question, the whole project appears singularly unreal and hopelessly unrelated to the concrete facts of the modern situation. Like many other utopias it is a reminder of the reply given by the Irishman to the stranger who enquired the way to Roscommon—'If I had to go to Roscommon I wouldn't be startin' from here.' In the task of social reconstruction we have got to 'start from here'.

(2) Another school of thought approaches the initial problem with a firmer realism and advocates the amalgamation of castes 'which have much cultural unity and economic similarity',[6] thus reducing the present confusing mass of distinctive units and finally pursuing the policy of amalgamation 'till society becomes casteless'. Mr. B. G. Ghurye argues in reply to this theory that 'to propose to abolish caste by slow consolidation of the smaller groups into larger ones is to miss the real problem'. That 'real problem' in his view 'arises mainly out of caste patriotism'. Amalgamation, he asserts, has been 'tried in Bombay for the last twenty years or so with disastrous results'. The sub-castes have tended to retain their vigour and exclusiveness, the new organization adopts a militant attitude towards other castes,

[1] See *Young India*, 1919-22, pp. 479-83.
[2] In *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* (Allen & Unwin), 1936, pp. 164-5.
[3] ibid.
[4] Ghurye, p. 183.
[5] ibid., p. 183.
[6] ibid., p. 182.

and the total result is that 'caste consciousness becomes more definite and virile'.[1]

(3) The third school is frankly iconoclastic; it regards caste as degrading, anti-social and anti-national and aims at its destruction, root and branch. Of this school Mr. Ghurye is an able representative. 'The true remedy' for caste is to destroy it by killing 'caste patriotism'.[2] 'We must fight it all round with a bold front without making any compromise.'[3] The state should ignore caste. Educated Hindus should renounce caste titles and affiliations and 'denounce the institution on the platform and in the press'. The result of this concentrated assault will be that 'the sentiment of caste loyalty will slowly die a natural death'. Ghurye points out that 'fusion of blood' has elsewhere proved 'an effective method of cementing alliances and nurturing nationalities' and advocates for India a policy of inter-caste marriage.

The Problem of Adjustment

It is not unfair to say that none of the three schools of caste reform described above possesses a clearly-defined ideological basis, unless it be the rather nebulous idea of progress which dominated the main currents of European thought in the nineteenth century and evoked all the fervour of a genuine religion. That religion of progress is now definitely on the decline in the continent of its origin and is giving place in some quarters to fatalistic theories of cultural decline. It can hardly be regarded as a firm foundation on which to build a new order of society.

We have already mentioned the fact that the old theological justification of caste has been widely abandoned: and if it is true—and it has been abundantly demonstrated in Indian social history—that 'it is the religious impulse which supplies the cohesive power which unifies a society and a culture', then the social problem of modern India is fundamentally religious.

The authors of the Lindsay Commission report expressed the view that behind the ferment of contemporary India, which is modifying her thought and disrupting her social life lies a deep contradiction which has not yet been resolved.[4]

[1] Ghurye, p. 184.
[2] ibid.
[3] ibid.
[4] *Report of the Commission on Christian Higher Education in India* (Oxford), 1931, p. 50.

'All the time the ancient doctrines of the Vedānta retain control, consciously or unconsciously, of the Hindu mind and mould the fundamental attitudes to life of the vast majority of the Hindu people.' This ancient system—'with its consequences of apathy in face of an unreal world, its indifference to the problems of a life which is illusion, and its desire to fly from them rather than solve them'—still rules India. Despite the absorption of much of the more realistic thought of the West, the Vedānta forms the background from which the deepest motives of the Indian people issue.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer, in his learned and sympathetic study of the development of Indian thought[1] calls attention to this same contradiction between what he calls the principles of 'world and life affirmation' and 'world and life negation'. Schweitzer foresees the growth through the co-operation of East and West of a profounder and more living philosophy than is yet known to either, which will be endowed with greater ethical and spiritual force. But the world and life negation, which at present 'enables Indian thought to avoid trying conclusions with reality', must adjust itself more fully to world and life affirmation which 'involves a compulsion to relate everything to the facts of reality'. This adjustment will tend to work itself out in an increasing emphasis on ethics for 'the need of mysticism which is really intrinsically ethical will make itself felt with ever-increasing force'.[2]

No intelligent and disinterested observer of Indian city life can fail to notice the ambiguity and confusion of contemporary social thought. This is to some extent the reflection of a confusion which is universal, but it is intensified by a marked failure to appreciate and to grapple with the fundamental incompatibility between the old social tradition and the new social idealism. There is a widespread flight from religion. The 'catholicity' of the Neo-Hindu movement, with its assertion that all religions are equally true, is in many quarters giving place to the scepticism which boldly affirms that all religions are equally false. That is not at all an illogical development. In the words of the Lindsay Commission Report: 'the philosophy of Vedānta and the life of secularism are perfectly natural allies'.

'An alliance is not impossible between this attitude to life and the attitude of "secularism" with its implication

[1] *Indian Thought and its Development* (London), 1936.
[2] ibid., p. 265.

that life and its ordering are determined by forces with which we have no relationship save that of submission. If India is really to recover hope and energy for the service of men and the rebuilding of life it must reach a deeper adjustment than it has yet attained. It must believe in the reality of life and its values and of the personal relationships through which eternal values are revealed. It must have enduring standards by which what is precious and what is vile can be measured. It must, in a word, accept the faith of the Incarnation.'[1]

[1] *Report of the Commission on Christian Higher Education in India*, p. 51.

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